

Mass Strike

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Left : occupation by students of the Sorbonne University in Paris in 1968

Right : factory occupation by workers in Chicago in 2008

" While not yet common, Plant occupations have happened [in several countries during 2009]. (...) In many cases jobs have been saved and workers are re-learning a tactic that can be far more effective, with mass support, than a conventional strike. "

" But what must be our model : the hierarchical class society that we are fighting, or its opposite, embodied by the democratic organs (communes, strike committees, etc.) which have appeared throughout the workers' struggles at the precise times that exploitation is breaking down ? "

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What is the International Luxemburgist Network?

Why this organization now?

Leaflet presented at the international conference on Rosa Luxemburg, at Berlin in January 2009

The International Luxemburgist Network is a new organization of militants who are in general agreement with the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg. Our aim, as members of the working class, is to help in the organizing of a world revolution, contributing our perspectives based on radical socialism and democracy.

We have organized this network around Luxemburg's concepts because we believe that these concepts are central to understanding and acting on the present world situation. We think that those who agree in this viewpoint need to work together to exchange views, formulate new ideas, disseminate them within the working-class movement and to coordinate action and organizing. Obviously, we are not, nor do we try to be, the only activists who base themselves on the work of Rosa Luxemburg. Neither do we believe that Luxemburgism can be a dogma. All militants can exhibit freely their ideas, since freedom is an indispensable condition for the construction of socialism. But there are a few key ideas that bring us together:

1. Luxemburg's conception of the democratic self-organization of the working class is vital today as an alternative to the Leninist notion of a vanguard of professional revolutionaries, separate from the working class and itself guided by a centralized body of experienced leaders. We reject such a top-down, hierarchical approach, because such hierarchy only mirrors the separation under class society of those who decide from those who work. It can never overturn such a society. Only organizations that are democratic and give the power to make decisions to the workers themselves can help to organize a new society in which all decisions are made democratically, and power is in the hands of the many, not the few.

2. The democratic organization and unification of the working class arises out of

workers' collective action in mass strikes, as Luxemburg first showed a century ago. The process of self-organization and mass transformation of consciousness that she described has been demonstrated repeatedly in the mass strikes of '18, '36, '68 and many other years, up to the present. It is through this process, not just through electoral or labor-union action, that the workers can form themselves into a class capable of leading society.

3. At a time of global economic collapse, Luxemburg's theory of the accumulation of capital makes it clear how and why capitalism has reached its ultimate limits. The continued existence of capitalism thus will lead humanity into a prolonged period of decline and ultimately, if allowed to continue, into a new Dark Age of barbarism. Her analysis shows why revolutionary transformation, an end to capitalism and the social ownership of all wealth are essential today. Capitalists' concessions to the working class in this period will occur in struggles, but will only be temporary unless power over the economy is taken away from the capitalists.

4. Finally, the unification of the working class is essential if it is to take power. Luxemburg's uncompromising opposition to all forms of nationalism and to the myth of national self-determination is a critical basis for consistent opposition to all the divisions of today based on sex, religion, nationality, sexual orientation or skin-color. Like Luxemburg, we believe that workers everywhere have the same interests.

Critical as it is, Luxemburg's work grew out of a living, evolving tradition of Marxist working-class thought that includes the work of many others before, during and since her time. We draw on that larger tradition, not on her work alone. We encourage all those who agree with the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg to contact us and to join this Network, since it is open to all.

Socialism or barbarism !

On the question of revolutionary organization : the case of the NPA in France

by Inti Pele



In the course of the past few years several attempts have been made to create unified parties of the “left of the left”, notably in Europe. The most recent case is that of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (*Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste* or NPA) meant to integrate in a single organization all the revolutionary tendencies in France. Such a regrouping certainly has its place today, with the space freed up by the Socialist Party’s move to the right and the disintegration of the Communist Party, which has lost contact with its working class base. At the same time, the bosses and the government are trying to impose their neoliberal counter-reforms before a social movement can block them.

The NPA’s process of formation is a good occasion to pose the question of revolutionary parties. This is not exclusively a theoretical interest. This is also a question linked to that of revolution, of democracy, of the relation between masses and leaders, and that between a party and the working class.

At first, we place this question in the context of the debate between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg

a century ago. From these two conflicting conceptions we can see how subsequent history has provided a response to the polemic and finally how we can today conceive of an anti-bureaucratic structure for a revolutionary organization. We can then compare this conception with the propositions that came out of the debates within the NPA’s local committees, in order to enrich that debate.

Controversy between Luxemburg and Lenin on the party (internal democracy, revolutionary consciousness of workers...)

In the course of bourgeois revolutions (for example, the French Revolution of 1789 and the German Revolution of 1848) the masses actively participated, but mainly as cannon fodder. A small minority, the bourgeoisie, directed the process in which they took political power from the nobility, ended feudalism and consolidated their economic power in the capitalist system. There is not here any contradiction—these revolutions did not have as their goal the emancipation of the masses, and

therefore it would have been useless to let them direct the movement.

Nonetheless, in the course of the 19th century, certain secret organizations formed, this time in the interests of the workers, but like the preceding revolutions, without them. These were essentially Blanquist conspiratorial organizations that used the tactic of “propaganda of the deed” and were part of the anarchist movement. The objective was to attack the symbols of bourgeois power (soldiers, policemen, politicians and capitalists) in order to draw the masses into the struggle, to awaken them. The masses again play the simple passive role of followers.

These conspiracies implied secrecy and therefore a strict separation between, on the one hand, the organization, and on the other, the masses. A few people were given the mission to make the revolution in the name of the masses, but without them, thus denying them the role of agents of change. This point of view also implied an extreme centralism with the blind obedience of the base. A strict, minutely detailed schema was formulated by the leadership.

It is in this same spirit that Lenin presented his vision of organization in *What is to be done?* (1902) and in *One step forward, two steps back* (1904). We can summarize these as follows: the party is to be formed from “professional revolutionaries”, organized on an ultra-centralized structure. The central committee is meant to be all powerful, even to the point of excluding members of local committee and hence deciding the composition of the congress, and destroying the role of the latter in controlling the leadership. In addition, this party must be strictly separated from the masses, which are judged incapable of coming, by themselves, to a revolutionary consciousness. As Lenin writes, “the modern socialist political consciousness cannot emerge except on the basis of profound scientific knowledge and such knowledge is not the product of the proletarians, but of the bourgeois intelligentsia or the petit-bourgeoisie.” It is for the leadership of the party, (“bourgeois intelligentsia” or “petit-bourgeois”) to make the revolution, according to its own model, fixed arbitrarily (by “profound scientific knowledge”) and in advance of any real struggles.

However, this elitism, rather than favoring the development of struggles, must become an obstacle in the way of such struggles. In trying to impose a schema, rigidly conceived before hand by the leaders, the organization can no longer adapt itself to the rapid evolution of the class struggle. The leadership, and in fact the party that submits to them, acquires a conservative role, unable to deal with the new exigencies of the movement.

This approach leads also rapidly to conflicts with the democratic organs of the workers themselves, formed in the fight—the Commune, the Soviets, the strike committees, the general assemblies... If the party is considered a superior formation to the autonomous organization of the working class (those who, according to Lenin, could not advance beyond reformism, nor take the leadership of a revolution) then the struggle must be betrayed or diverted, according to the good will of a handful of leaders. The organization thus denies to the working class the active role in the revolution, and substitutes itself for the class.

In sum, the Leninist or Blanquist methods do not distinguish themselves on this point from the earlier bourgeois revolutionaries or from the reformists. In all these cases, the masses are underestimated and are called on to blindly delegate their power. It is the very basis of modern “democratic” capitalist societies: workers can freely express themselves and vote in each election, but their opinions or votes can’t put the system in question because the democracy is only formal. The workers are always asked to “trust the leaders” or to “pick leaders that they trust”.

Luxemburg’s alternative

Rosa Luxemburg presents a completely different point of view. It was explained in two pamphlets: *Organizational Question of the Russian Social-Democracy*, in reply to Lenin, and *Masses and Leaders*, both in 1904.

In this view, just as outlined in the *Communist Manifesto*, the party is not seen as an organization isolated from the working class, but rather as a part of that class, that is, it is composed of workers. It is not a matter of uniting “monk soldiers”, as foreseen by Lenin, ready to follow orders, but of grouping together

the most advanced elements of the proletariat, in order to more effectively intervene in the class struggle.

In contrast to past historical periods, the workers movement distinguishes itself by having to rely on the mobilization of masses, not as followers-of-orders, but as real actors. For the workers to be emancipated, they must lead themselves. Thus, the party – the tool in the class struggle – cannot be composed of experts detached from the class, but of revolutionary workers.



The workers movement is based on the autonomous action of the masses, the innovative spirit of revolt and of self-direction which must be found within the party, bringing together “the most resolute part” of the proletariat, as the *Communist Manifesto* puts it. Thus this spirit must be maintained within the organization. In addition, in making the direction of the party flow from the base upwards, the party can rapidly adapt itself to the chaotic evolution of the social movement. This requires letting go of all rigid schema pre-established by leaders.

Therefore, a powerful democracy is required, a direct democracy. As Luxemburg explains, “*It is an abuse of words, and a deception to designate by the same term, “discipline”, two notions as different as, on the one hand, the absence of thought and will in a body of a thousand hands and legs, carrying out automatic movement, and on the other hand, the spontaneous coordination of conscience acts, the politics of a collective. How could one have at one time the well-regulated docility of an oppressed class and the organized uprising of a*

class fighting for its own emancipation?”

This essential double condition of a revolutionary party (internal democracy and a close relation between the party and the movement that leaves the latter its autonomy) is essential for avoiding the sclerosis and bureaucratic transformation of the party, and thus its conversion into a conservative and anti-revolutionary force.

In effect, all bureaucracies have in common, not only their detachment from the movements on which they are based (for example, the leaderships of mainstream unions during major working-class struggles), but also the tendency to impose in advance pre-established plans (and thus simplistic) that ignore the latest evolution of the struggle, “*The unconsciousness precedes the consciousness and the logic of the objective historical process precedes the subjective logic of the protagonists*” (*Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*). One cannot fully analyze in advance a phenomenon; it is only by analyzing what has already happened that one can arrive at conclusions that allow the best advice to the masses, which is the role of the revolutionary party.

This is not a new thought in the Marxist movement. Marx and Engels already explained in 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto* that the communists “*do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement*”. Rather, “*the theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.*”

The positions of both Bolsheviks and reformists are built on a priori, pre-established models. They are in no way based on the historical reality. They are therefore in coherent with bourgeois theories but in opposition to the Marxist method, which analyzes facts in order to draw conclusions, and not the inverse, conceiving of principles that must then be applied to reality.

History is the sole judge

But the reality of the workers movement is characterized by the self-mobilization of the workers. In opposition to the stereotypes about masses that cannot lead themselves, at each major moment in the class struggle, we find that it has been the masses that played the principal role, not acting as followers as in the bourgeois revolutions. This was the case in 1905 and 1917 in Russia, in 1918-1919 in Germany, in 1936 and 1968 in France... During these struggles, the masses innovated by creating autonomous leading organs (communes, soviets, strike committees, general assemblies)... and also in their tactics, (mass strikes, unifying economic and political objectives, both reformist goals and the overthrow of the system).

Marx took important lessons from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871: *"the Commune was formed of the municipal councilors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time."* (*The Civil War in France*). The objective of the Commune was to go beyond Paris and extend to all of France: *"the rural communities of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the mandat impératif (formal instructions) of his constituents"* (*op. cit.*). This organization at the national level implies a centralization or coordination, but not the suffocating centralization envisioned by Lenin.

The party being an aspect of the workers movement, we can inspire ourselves from all of these struggles, in particular the passages just cited on the Commune, in order to determine its structure. In effect, since there is a strong tie between the method, organization and the aim, revolution, these two aspects must be coherent; we cannot fight against social submission in a submissive fashion. The emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves... and not that of an illuminated elite!

How can the NPA function democratically?

With this context in mind, one can't ignore a certain contradiction in the founding texts of the NPA, elaborated by the CAN (National Animation Committee), and which have been discussed prior to the foundation of the party. On the one hand, it is said rightly in these documents that the party has to be as democratic as possible, rejecting bureaucracy, because *"the forms of organization and the functioning of the party are not neutral. There is no doubt that the means reflect the ends and thus it is necessary that our internal organization shows the sincerity of our convictions"* (p. 22 of the Internal Debate Bulletin). In addition, the NPA must become a support of the social moment, without substituting for it.

To be sure, we support these propositions, but looking at the details, a contradiction appears; top-to bottom centralization. It would be false to say that the proposed statutes correspond to a purely Leninist scheme, but they envision a hierarchy that can ultimately generate a stifling bureaucracy. The justification furnished for this centralism is the centralization inherent to capitalism. But what must be our model: the hierarchical class society that we are fighting, or its opposite, embodied by the democratic organs (communes, strike committees, etc.) which have appeared throughout the workers struggles at the precise times that exploitation was breaking down?

According to the proposal of the CAN, a Congress which meets every two years elects a National Political Council (CPN). This in turn elects an Executive Committee that leads the party. In turn, it can designate a permanent secretariat. The CPN controls the Executive Committee by meeting quarterly. On the other hand, the local committees have a certain autonomy in adapting the national decision to the local realities.

Now this structure goes from top to bottom. In fact, wouldn't it be more democratic to have decisions coming from the base to the national coordination? This makes the national level adapt to the choices of the militants, and instead of functioning the other way around. This would involve a better representation of those militants.

Basically, in having a congress elect the CPN every two years, not only are the evolutions of opinions of the base isolated from the national level, but new ideas coming from the base can't be voted on except locally between the two congresses. At the same time, the leadership elected for long terms is hardly controlled through quarterly meetings. In this situation, it's hard to see the place of a real rotation of positions and it would be impossible not to fear a bureaucratization of this hierarchy.

An alternative to this top-down centralism would be direct democracy, such as that put in place by the Commune, among other examples. Here, the local committee, consisting of all members, is the basic organ of the party. The power must emanate from this level to the national one.

Thus, each committee directly elects its delegates to the CPN, with each delegate responsible to their own electors and revocable at any moment. These election could be, for example, every quarter in order not only to allow some rotation but also to better reflect the new state of the spirit of the organization as a whole. The CPN elects in its turn various executive committees, each responsible for a specific subject, (why have just a small group in charge of the executive?) These committees are also revocable and responsible to the CPN, and thus directly to the local committees' delegates.

In this sense, it's encouraging to read the amendments proposed by the committees of the Hautes-Alpes and Paris 18th Goutte d'or (p.28 of the Debate bulletin). These comrades propose a structure very close to that we have indicated here, allowing coordination really coming from the base and responsible to it. Without this double condition, democracy within the organization becomes merely formal, like those in the capitalist societies, where one can vote without real control, and one can express oneself on the local level with having power to change things globally.

In conclusion, if the working class has to be provided with representative organs of its movement, it must be a party, not only as unitary as possible (or active together with other groups), but it must be really democratic, and therefore anti-bureaucratic. It must stay in phase with the movement itself: not trying to direct, nor impose on it theoretical schemes that are often little adapted to reality, instead knowing how to follow innovations. If the party must not substitute itself for the organs coming out of the struggle against capital, its existence is primordial, because it consists of the accumulation of the experience of the past (the theoretical aspect) in order to support the best perspectives and intervention in the struggles (the practical aspect).

The principal error of Lenin was not to see that historical events are the fruits of processes, in which everything is bound by dialectical relations, and that which is true today (low level of workers' consciousness) will not be true tomorrow. Through its fights, the working class develops its consciousness, this does not mean that it makes no mistakes, but as Luxemburg wrote at the end of Organizational Questions *"the errors committed by a truly revolutionary workers movement are infinitely more productive historically and more valuable than the infallibility of the best "central committee".*

With this article we have discussed the structure of the party. One must also ask if its existence is necessary. We reply to this at the end: history has shown how elitist structures have crippled the movement, so it is necessary to have an organization capable of opposing these bureaucracies, whether they are unions or political parties. It is necessary to form such an anti-bureaucratic organization; we appeal therefore to all militants, members or not of the NPA, to struggle, together, against any type of dirigism. Or, as the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon said: *"Workers of the revolution, cultivate irreverence."*

See also on our website

The founding congress of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste in France

<http://www.luxemburgism.lautre.net/spip.php?article50>

Workers struggles grow in France: two million on the streets, universities on strike

by Eric Lerner

The present article was written at the beginning of 2009, marked by a general strike against the neoliberal reforms of the French government. Back then, many saw this as a step forward for a larger mobilization against the bosses' attacks and their crisis, politicians feared the situation in Guadeloupe and Greece would create such a wave in the country. However, these strikes were mainly controlled by the mainstream unions bureaucrats, who limited themselves to call for isolated "days of actions" so as to block the idea of general unlimited strike. The strategy worked out, after so many sacrifices workers gave up and there has not been a national struggle ever since.

The national general strike on Thursday, January 29th in France was a resounding success for the unions, left political parties and many other groups who called it, with some two million workers in the streets, equal to the largest of recent mobilizations. While in Paris the march of some 200,000 was not exceptionally large, the protests were very widespread, with major demonstrations in dozens of cities that have rarely seen such marches. Support for the strike in the opinion polls was high as well, with 70% of the French agreeing with the aims of the strike.

In Paris, the demonstrators came mainly with the banners of the unions, with both the largest federations the CGT and the more leftist SUD being most in evidence. There were large numbers of professionals, health workers and social workers, marching in protest of the Sarkozy government's attacks on all public service sectors. The strike occurred against the background of the nearly two-weeks old unlimited general strike in Guadeloupe, where the latest demonstration called out 65,000 people nearly 15% of the island's total population.

Despite the protests, Sarkozy vowed to continue with his "reforms", his word for his attacks on the public sector, which predated the economic crisis, but have only intensified since then.

On Saturday, a national meeting was called to try to unify the many struggles of professionals in education, health, justice and social services. The Paris meeting was packed with 700 participants and filled the day with tales of the disastrous effects of the Sarkozy reforms in slashing budgets and attempting to roll back worker gains of past decades. The reforms

reflected policies being implemented across Europe.

However, when there were calls for action, including refusing to carry out unjust laws, those at the podium resisted. "Words are actions" protested one of the organizers of the event. In the end there was broad agreement only on the need to set up coordinating committees with representatives from all the professions. A few participants also called for broadening such committees to representing all those in the struggle, including workers in the private sector, students, undocumented immigrants and the unemployed.

The confrontation with the government broadened on Monday, when professors voted to begin a national unlimited strike of all university and research institutions. Some 300 elected delegates from 74 universities, including a few student representatives, met at the Sorbonne University in Paris as the General Assembly of the National Coordination of the Universities. The delegates were elected for the meeting by the faculties –they were not union officials. They unanimously voted to extend to all institutions an unlimited strike which has already begun at Strasbourg University and some other campuses. The key demands of the strike were to roll back government decrees that would make graduate studies vastly more difficult, limiting them essentially to the wealthy, slashing enrollments, and greatly reducing the pay of new professors. The strike was also protesting the recently passed "loi LRU" which, under the pretext of giving individual universities autonomy, concentrated all powers in the hands of university directors, taking then way from the faculties. There was a general realization that the strike could only win if it gather the support

of the students, and reached out to other parts of the educational system. The delegates agreed to adopt a demand to undo the Sarkozy "reforms" for primary and second school teachers. There was general agreement that mobilizing students, organizing an active strike with political meetings substituting for classes, was a priority. However, only a handful of students were delegates. The formula adopted for the next General Assembly, three faculty delegates and one student delegate per university, was also not the most welcoming for

students, who, after all, vastly outnumber the faculty.

The first key test of the strike will come Tuesday, the first day of the strike on most campuses, where support from the bulk of the faculty and students will become visible. A second key test will be on Thursday, with the first mass demonstrations. If the faculty can succeed in bringing in students and the broader community, the movement in the university may fan the flames of workers' protests throughout France.



Join the *International Luxemburgist Forum* at <http://luxemburgism.forumr.net>,
a forum for all those in general agreement with the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg

Time to sit down ! Demand socialization of finance !

by Eric Lerner

The following article was written in response to the widely reported plant occupation in Chicago in December 2008. While not yet common, plant occupations have happened since then in several countries in 2009 – occupations in Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey Canada and Argentina – when factories were threatened with shutdown. In many cases jobs have been saved and workers are re-learning a tactic that can be far more effective, with mass support, than a conventional strike).

As in the US and France in 1936-37 and again in France in 1968, today Republic Windows and Doors workers in Chicago are showing the way to fight. With community support to prevent police action, seizing the workplace not only eliminates any possibility of scabbing or moving production, but poses a threat to the capitalists' control over the economy. The immigrant rights, anti-war and labor movements need to provide all support not only to the Republic workers but to all workers who will follow in their lead and sit down to seize their workplaces.

We support the Republic workers' demands that Bank of America release the credit needed to keep their jobs and pay their wages. But we should also ask: why do we have to demand anything of the robber barons who run Bank of America? The Federal Government has already put into the BOA and the other top financial institutions far more capital than their net worth, which is less than zero for these insolvent banks. By all rights, the Federal government already OWNS the financial giants like BOA. Private control of finance has failed spectacularly, so why should Kenneth Lewis and the other thieves on the BOA board be making any decisions at all?

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When we protest at BOA offices, we should be demanding that the Government take ownership of BOA and all financial institutions—the banks, the pension funds, the insurers—and run them with ELECTED boards at the municipal, state and federal levels. We must demand the

socialization of finance! David Sole, President of UAW local 2334, is absolutely right when he says that this crisis can end only if workers control economic decisions.

If the government owns the financial institutions, it can wipe off the books the mountain of debt that is strangling the economy. And if elected boards control the Government-owned financial institution, they can decide what credit needs to be given and what debts need to be written off to maintain production and to keep people in their homes. We need DEMOCRATIC control over finance to get out of this crisis. The planned bail-out of the automakers will include an appointed control board that could well impose cuts in auto workers wages and benefits in the name of "common sacrifice". We need to demand boards ELECTED by all those affected by financial decisions.

Of course, we can't expect the politicians to support this demand. Only a massive workers movement could win such a demand, and only in a struggle to take full control of the economy into our own hands. But the outpouring of support for the Republic sit-down shows that such a mass movement may not be far away. Now is the time for bold actions—and bold demands. Nothing less will lead the way out of a global Depression.

The first step is to discuss among ourselves what we must demand for a Workers Recovery Plan, both on the 'net and in community forums. Let's start this discussion now.

"Sit down; just take a seat. Sit down and rest your feet. Sit down; you've got 'em beat. Sit Down! Sit down!"

1936 song "Sit Down" by Maurice Sugar

See also on our website **Factory occupation in Chicago represents major step in the class struggle** at <http://www.luxemburgism.lautre.net/spip.php?article26>

Like ears of corn under the rain : the unemployed councils multiply in Spain

by JM Delgado

At the end of 2008, unemployment in Spain reached three million workers. Just three months later, it was four million, with the unemployment rate up to 17.4%, doubling in the last 12 months. One million households, 6% of the total, have no employed members. Among immigrants the unemployment rate has reached 28.4%, while for the native-born, 15.2 % are unemployed. All of these figures are official ones, published in a April 24th, 2009 press release on the Economically Active population, by the National Institute of Statistics. But, as we know, the numbers are increasing and by the end of the year, five million are expected to be out of work.

As a result of the demonstration called by left-wing union confederations (CGT, CNT and SOC-SAT) and from the organizing of social forums, and other mass actions, assemblies of the unemployed have been formed on an almost daily basis across Spain, starting at the beginning of 2009, to address the crisis and demand solutions.

Now there are unemployed councils, or assemblies, in Barcelona, Madrid, Malaga, Seville, Granada, Cordoba, and Albacete, Valencia and throughout Spain. This article surveys some of the activities in the spring.

On March 23rd, activists of the assembly of unemployed of Madrid, formed on initiative of affiliates of the CNT, occupied offices of the state employment ministry, INEM. They opened banners that demanded:

- Reduction of the national maximum work week to 30 hours without reduction of pay;
- Prohibition of overtime, piecework and contract, multiple jobs;
- Guaranteed vacation of 31 annual working days and Decrease of the retirement age to 55 with no reduction in pensions.

On April 20th , the newly constituted assembly of unemployed of Barcelona occupied in turn another unemployment office and distributed pamphlets demanding:

- Jobs for all unemployed or no limits on duration of unemployment compensation;
- Minimum compensation of 1,200.00 Euros per month;
- Free public transport for all unemployed;
- Prohibition of layoffs;
- State payments of rent, gas and electric and university charges for the unemployed.

In Moron (Seville), a group of unemployed occupied the town hall for 4 days to protest that only 10 % of the 5 million Euros of the newly approved State Fund of Local Investment, destined to relieve the unemployment, especially in the rural areas, had actually been used and only 74 jobs had been created. They also denounced the absence of transparency in awarding contracts.



The assembly of unemployed of Granada issued calls for a general strike with explicitly anti-capitalist slogans denouncing the bank bailouts.

In the city of Dos Hermanas (as well as in Seville), the assembly of the unemployed and temporary workers organized demonstrations against foreclosures and evictions. In Cordoba, the assembly demanded free municipal services, such as urban transport, and financing this by taxes on the rich. They also demanded assistance for those in precarious situations, and on strike, who confront evictions and repossession of valuables for non-payment. This assistance would come in the form of the city governments creating jobs, a program that would be democratically controlled by the unemployed.

At the end of March and beginning of April, the Forum for Social Change (in the Basque Language, *"Herria-Abian!"*) had their first demonstrations in Bilbao, Domestic, Irene and Gastric under the slogan *"In the Face of the Crisis, Social Change"* (in the Basque language *"Aldaketa Soziala"*) and deliberated on whether to support the general strike called for May 21st by the pro-separatist Basque unions and social organizations. In Seville activists announced that on May 7th they would hold a preparatory meeting for the creation of a local assembly of the unemployed in that city.

Although ignored and looked at with suspicion by the big trade union bureaucracies, CCOO and UGT, the assemblies of unemployed are blooming throughout the country. Not a week goes by without demonstrations. Generally the demands include free public services and 1,200.00 Euros per month minimum benefits. In all the places with an explicit or implicitly anti-

capitalist base, the movement raises demands against the banks, the G-20, and the government of the "Socialist" President Zapatero...

All the unemployed groups have adopted the workers' assembly form of organization without fixed "representatives", secretariats, commissions, or bureaucracy. This is a form of organization that has traditionally been used by the working class during the most intense periods of the class struggle in Spain, later to languish under the manipulative pressure of bureaucratic trade unionism.

The assemblies of unemployed are an important part of the self-organized resistance of the working people against the crisis. They deserve the whole support of the alternative trade unions and of all the workers in general. In addition, the support of the unemployed assemblies must be a central focus and obligation of the revolutionary left.

The revolutionary left should help the assemblies organize and spread throughout the country, without replacing or manipulating them; they should contribute to their coordination beyond just the local realities; and defend their independence, their transparency and their radically democratic character. If this happens, that would be a sign that the unemployed revolutionary militants within the movement, and the supporters from the outside, are going in the right direction – the direction of Socialism. There is no other alternative.

Also on our website (<http://luxemburgism.lautre.net>)

China : factory workers, teachers, even police strike, occupy buildings (Eric Lerner) <http://www.luxemburgism.lautre.net/spip.php?article28>

Collapse of global steel production (Eric Lerner) <http://www.luxemburgism.lautre.net/spip.php?article29>

Has change come to post-Katrina New Orleans? Bush, Obama, and the first 100 days (Jay Arena) <http://www.luxemburgism.lautre.net/spip.php?article76>

... and more in Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Norwich