

Solidarity between workers of Serbia and Croatia

A simple solidarity motion will make big waves. More than 20 years after the Vukovar war, where in 1991 the Milosevic regime razed to its very foundations a peaceful working class Slavonian town where Serbs and Croats lived together, Serbian and Croatian workers are stretching a hand out to each other as workers across the frontier. In a Serbia still hostage to its own nationalism and where privatisation is a mafia-infested as it is in Croatia, the working class has so far had no political or trade union channel through which to express itself. So it has provided itself with a sort of duly-registered citizens' associations in several Voivodine towns, through which workers have fought through the courts to have mafioso privatisations declared invalid. Here and there they have won. These are not political bodies. Nevertheless, they are the only living and real form of organisation workers have in many towns, and they tend to join together in federations. The existing political parties are too rotten and the trade unions too divided and discredited, and so workers have been forced to find something else on an ad hoc basis. In this struggle they are supported by two students from Belgrade, working on their own account, who have set up a "Movement for Freedom". This also supports attempts to organise by small farmers who have also been completely plundered. As soon as the appeal for solidarity with the Jadrankamen workers in Brac in Croatia was launched, two organisations, "Equality" in Zrenjanin and "Solidarity" in Subotica, where Serb and Hungarian workers are closely mixed together, announced their support. Below is the latter's statement, published in the Croatian Trotskyist journal "Radnicka Borba".

Radoslav Pavlovic

Workers International

Workers' protest in Subotica

"To the workers of Jadrenkamen:

Dear comrades,

We have received your news and your appeal for solidarity to which we cannot remain indifferent. Our citizens' association was born in a struggle on the part of existing and former workers at the "Sever" plant in Subotica to assert our rights. At present we are involved in a struggle to keep this plant going. It used to employ 6000 workers, but now there are only 450. Privatisation has meant that its assets have been pillaged and it has been systematically destroyed, and we want it to be declared invalid. They have smashed the plant up under the watchful gaze of local and national politicians who have collaborated with the owners to make impressive financial gains. Using the same recipe they have destroyed 30 perfectly viable firms in Subotica and the whole of industry in Serbia. That is why one of our objectives is the re-industrialisation of the economy. As your placards say, we too want to work and have control over that work. Your struggle and ours are not isolated cases.

As you can see, workers all over Serbia and Croatia are rising against mafioso privatisation to defend the right to work, to an education, to social security and insurance in old age. The working class of Europe and Latin America is already on its feet. We witness the heroic struggle of the Spanish miners. Over the last few days the workers at the "Viomihaniki Metalleutiki" factory in northern Greece have occupied the plant and manage it themselves.

The maintenance and functioning of society depend uniquely on the working class. It is high time that workers once again became conscious of the power they represent. We should not suffer in silence, but struggle determinedly and unite our struggles. Don't let them use national borders to divide us. Whether at home or abroad the capitalist is the common enemy of those of us who live by our own labour. Only by struggling

together can we overcome existing obstacles and save ourselves from capitalist barbarism.

Dear comrades in struggle , we send you greetings from Subotica in the hope that we can work together and confident that together we will win.

OCCUPY – DEFEND – PRODUCE! (*)

“Solidarnost” Citizens’ Association, Subotica, 14 July 2012.

President: Vanja DRAGOJLOVIC

(*) This slogan was picked up from Croatian workers. It is tending to become a recognition sign of workers’ struggles