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Greece

2/3 of people who still have a job are paid several months late

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Greek employment law was weakened from 2010 to 2013, with the reversal of the hierarchy of agreements, the suppression of their automatic application and easier dismissal. And unemployment figures and poverty do not tell the whole story. There is also unpaid work: the great majority (two-thirds) of people who still have a job are paid several months late.

Further there is the recent trend of bankruptcy, means that workers receive what's due to them only after the banks and other Europeans or Greek creditors. In the last few weeks alone, bankruptcies have included one of the biggest Athenian luxury hotels (Ledra, although it had an occupation rate of 98 %!), one of the biggest security companies (Pyrros, 800 people) and the biggest supermarket chain (Marinopoulos) with 12,500 workers.

In Salonika, another big hotel company (Metropolitan and Theoxenia) has imposed a wage cut on its employees which, at 500 euros, is below even the minimum wage (586 euros) which had been imposed nationally by the Troika. With the reversal of the hierarchy of agreements, they are allowed to do it! It is true that most of the major employers have until now confined themselves to the national fall in wages required by the Troika (751 euros in 2011) and other flexibilities, possibilities of non-remuneration, precarity, outsourcing and so on.

More attacks on pensions

Yet this destruction of the rights (and lives) of workers still does not satisfy the voraciousness of capital: therefore a new step is planned for autumn, with the European program of Hollande-Merkel-Tsipras which is to "liberalize" redundancies even more and to destroy the legislation on trade unions and strikes: legalizing lock-outs, erasing the protections of trade unionism and making strikes illegal without a vote.

Apparently, they realise they have politically unique opportunity, as demonstrated by the destruction of the pensions system voted on recently. In effect, the Tsipras government has not only imposed general supplementary cuts in retirement pensions (already lowered 12 times in 3 years by an average of almost 40%!), but has also managed to structurally remodel the distribution system in a capitalistic sense, with scheduled reductions in the long term and systematic programmes, while using allegedly egalitarian "Marxist" arguments.

Yet the big workers' mobilization of February 4, 2016 as well as - in another register but very linked - the mobilization of the solidarity of the impoverished Greek population in support of the refugees from war that "civilized" Europe prefers to see drowned, like other trade union, social, and ecological struggles, more fragmented but continuous, announce a gestating explosion against this rampant barbarism. The question of the political outlet, necessarily anti-capitalist, will be key: the broad mobilization of French workers gives hope that we are no longer isolated, no longer alone.

July 25