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Greece

A provocation that should alert us!

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The French press has said little or nothing about it... unlike the Greek media, which we can say really created the event. On Thursday, April 16 there took place in central Athens a workers' rally and demonstration... entirely taken in hand by bosses and managers, and supported by every reactionary in the city.

We have mentioned it on several occasions: in the north of Greece, not far from Thessaloniki, gold mines are being exploited, producing high levels of pollution. The giant of the region, the Canadian company Eldorado Gold, has been aiming for several years to expand its activities around the town of Skouries, which triggered a massive mobilization of the local population, with rallies and violent clashes with the police of the Samaras government. Very early on, several things became very clear: the former government of the Troika was taking its orders from the employers and it used methods of barbaric violence against the local people who had mobilized, with police descending on their homes to terrorize them. Moreover, this company took little notice of legality, and pushed forward with the destruction of forests in order to open its new site, despite the absence of any authorization to do so. Finally, it succeeded in manipulating the company's workers, turning them against the mobilized people and forcing them to depend only on the company... and on the members of the Nazi group Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn) who came to give them their support "against the terrorists"!

A reactionary descent on Athens

We could have hoped that with the arrival of the Syriza government this question, among the most popular with left activists, was going to have a radical solution: a ban on opening a new mine. However, here as in other areas, the Tsipras government discusses but does not act, while the revanchist Right and the Nazis have seen very well the possibility of exploiting the disoriented miners! Result: a real pitched battle there a few weeks ago between local residents and miners... who received the backing of the MAT (riot police) who violently charged the local people.

And above all, the organization on Thursday, April 16 of a descent on Athens by 4,000 miners with their families, entirely organized and supervised by the management of the company! No need to dwell on the free transport, with 85 buses, and the brand new yellow jackets and helmets worn by the miners and their families. The most important thing is the way the whole thing was stage-managed: a big crowd of television journalists was there from the morning onwards, to greet these brave workers on every channel... this time without a word about the city centre being blocked. Not forgetting the overblown commentaries on this demonstration, whereas on the evening of the same day, the counter-demonstration of 2,000 people in support of the people of Skouries barely got a mention... except to show, surprise, surprise, some hooded individuals throwing Molotov cocktails.

There was one sight that sent a shiver down our spines: repeatedly, we saw groups of miners banging on iron grills with their helmets, in a clear comparison with empty saucepans of middle-class housewives in Latin America demonstrating against left governments. And there was a bonus, providing this clearly stage-managed demonstration with an echo of the French "Demo for Everyone" against same-sex marriage: we saw a former minister of Samaras, a mangy ex-fascist clown, leading the demonstration with a workers' helmet on his head. The image was constantly relayed on all the TV channels.

In short, the message was clear: the real Greece, healthy and anti-union, is back, confronting the government that is protecting the eco-terrorists, who according to some banners are not "real inhabitants" of the region of Skouries.

Winning at Skouries is an issue of national dimensions

The event was certainly ridiculous and in bad taste; it remains worrying by its successful stage-managing and its eminently political dimension. And it therefore demands a strong and massive response from both the population (many committees exist in the country) and the government. However, on that side, despite protests from many officials about the use of the police against the people of Skouries, Tsipras went at the beginning of this week to congratulate the minister responsible for the police and to reinforce the propaganda operation "Now the police are at the service of the people"... When we know the influence of the Nazis in this repressive force, we can only have doubts about the success of the objective of democratizing the police!

As far as the workers in the mine are concerned, it is clear that the goal is of course to break the relationship of submission that the bosses have established over them. But but this can only be done on a clear basis: there can be no question of giving Eldorado Gold the possibility of expanding. And on this basis, we must obtain the guarantee of employment or retraining on the site. According to the latest news, it seems that several miners have the feeling of having been manipulated by an employer who did not even seek legal authorization. This is perhaps the beginning of a contradiction that can help turn the tide.

Winning at Skouries would obviously have a national impact; it would be a stinging defeat for the bosses and for the Troika, which still considers that Greece is for sale!

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