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On the way back in Croatia and Slovenia

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For some time now in Slovenia skinheads have been attacking immigrant workers. This has caused indignation and provoked a reaction from radical youth and the Slovenian left.

A demonstration was organized on April 29, 2009 in Ljubljana. Some 2,000 people marched through the streets of the centre of the city. Speakers denounced fascist violence, but also attacked the consequences of the irruption of the market economy on the situation of the working class. In fact, many companies are closing and unemployment is increasing considerably in the country.

It was during this demonstration that part of the activists of the Slovenian left decided to go to Croatia on Thursday April 30 to gather information about and support the movement of occupation of university faculties, and in particular the Zagreb faculty of philosophy.

Very warmly welcomed in Zagreb by those in charge of the faculty, two members of the Slovenian group, Rastko Mocnik and Primoz Krasovec, had the opportunity to speak and to explain the disastrous consequences of the introduction of the market economy in Slovenia and in the former socialist countries.

In the evening, a plenary session was held in the academic room, where discussion took place not only around the principal demand of the students and professors of the faculty in favour of free tuition at all levels of teaching, but also around a certain number of demands concerning the whole of society, and particularly the situation of the working class in Croatia, which is also severely affected by the recession in the world economy. Among these demands, we should mention the abolition of the additional tax which has to be paid in order to have access to health care (which was previously entirely free), the penalization of economic fraud (this demand is particularly aimed at the theft of formerly collective property), the establishment of a fund for the restitution of the goods which had been plundered, the reduction in VAT on food (which at the request of the European Union has been raised to 22 per cent)...

A striking fact was the intervention of the president of the principal Croatian trade-union confederation, Anna Knezevic, giving her support to the demands of the students and inviting them to take part in the May 1 demonstration the following day in Zagreb, which was enthusiastically received by the assembled students. A representative of the confederation of free trade unions of Slovenia, Goran Lukic, and a Slovenian student also intervened and distributed a leaflet of solidarity from the president of the Slovenian trade unions, Dusan Semolic.

Twenty-one university faculties were occupied in Croatia and everything indicates that these actions have been greeted with sympathy by the population, because over and above the specific demands concerning education, it is all of the consequences of the irruption of neo-liberalism and the world economic crisis which are being called into question in the country.

The plenary assembly of April 30 was not only a manifestation of the strength of the movement and its relationship to the key questions of Croatian society, it was also an enormous working meeting during which the tasks of many commissions were defined (for example the one dealing with video) and where those responsible for carrying out the various tasks were designated. So self-management is once again being practised in the Croatian student movement.

Ljubljana, May 4, 2009