

If we accept sacrifices today, the bourgeoisie will hit us harder tomorrow!

After several weeks of contortions by the management of Airbus and a meeting between Merkel and Chirac, the axe has fallen: 10,000 redundancies in Europe, the closure and sale of several factories.

The management, hand on heart, tell us "there will be no compulsory redundancies", "everything will be settled by early retirement and voluntary departures".

No compulsory redundancies at Airbus, but that only concerns half of the workers affected: 5,000 temporary or subcontract workers will be asked to go elsewhere. As for the workers at Airbus, we know what "voluntary redundancy" means: harassment by lower management to force workers out. In all, there will be still more unemployment, above all among the young who are looking for a job. And for those that remain at Airbus: speed-ups and an increase in hours worked for the same wages, or less.

How do the bourgeoisie and the unions explain the crisis at Airbus?

In order to explain the crisis at Airbus that lies behind such measures, everyone has their own song. For Gallois, the boss of Airbus, it's principally because of the strong euro; the planes are too dear in relation to those produced by Boeing. For the unions, it's because of bad management or the greed of shareholders. For the bosses, it's because the state has interfered with their industrial policy, which is not its business: private investors should sort it out themselves. For the parties of the left, it's because the state has not played its role of shareholder. For the French press, it's because of the German state taking the lion's share. For the German press, and the bourgeoisie behind it, it's difficult to throw this argument back in their faces because, without the French being involved, 6,100 jobs have gone at the chemical giant Bayer, at the same time as the management of Deutsch Telekom decided to transfer 50,000 wage earners to subcontracting, which is a way to set them up for redundancy once they have been dispersed around multiple small enterprises. And for good measure, those that remain work an extra 5 hours a week without any wage increase. Through its media, the German bourgeoisie tries to console the workers at Airbus by saying that it could be worse for them: the French workers have been hit harder. It's the same in the Spanish press: it's not too bad, but that's because we are more competitive. And to add in the nationalist refrain, the French and Germans are

accused of doing their own deals without consulting the Spanish.

As for the British press, discretion is the order of the day: after all, at the same moment there are hundreds of thousands of workers in the health service being attacked over wages that are already low.

What do those who reject the decisions of the Airbus management propose to us?

For the German unions, the difficulties at Airbus are one example among others of bad management by the bosses, which is equally responsible for the difficulties of Deutsch Telekom and Bayer. They want to be closer to the management of the firms, when they already represent practically 50% of the administration and are already involved in decisions concerning Airbus or other sectors. In this framework, they propose that measures taken "to preserve the future of Airbus" are discussed locally, factory by factory, between unions and bosses.

The French unions, for their part, also denounce the bad "governance" of the present management and propose that the state is more implicated in the management of Airbus, a perspective which is equally supported by the Prime Minister and the candidates of the right and the centre in the next presidential elections, Sarkozy and Bayrou. As for the socialist candidate, Segolene Royal, she makes the further proposal that regional authorities should be involved in managing the capital of the aircraft industry. That's to say, what already exists in Germany, where the Lander is fully part of the capital of Airbus, with the great success that we now seeing!

Faced with capitalist competition, refuse to let them divide us!

There are partial truths in some of these declarations. It is true that the strong euro is an obstacle to the sale of the aircraft produced in Europe faced with competition from Boeing. It is true that there are problems in the management of Airbus. In particular, it is true that competition between the German and French states has not helped things. Everyone can state a small part of the truth, but all share the same lie: that the workers who today are paying for the difficulties at Airbus have the same interests as the bosses. In sum, they should adopt the aim put forward by all the speeches: that Airbus should be more profitable than Boeing. That is also exactly what the American bosses say to American workers and it is for that same reason that the latter have been subjected to tens of thousands of redundancies in the course of

the last few years. In the final count, in all the speeches that we hear from the “responsible” people, whether government, bosses or unions, the American workers are supposed to be the enemies of European workers in the same way that French, German, British and Spanish workers are supposed to be all enemies of each other. In today’s economic war, all the bourgeois forces want to set workers of different countries against each other as they do in military wars.

That states are in competition with each other is perfectly true. But the wars of the 20th century show that it is the workers who have most to lose in these rivalries between capitalist nations and who have no interest in submitting to the orders and interests of their national bourgeoisies. In the logic of capitalism, it is necessary for American workers as well as European workers to make still more sacrifices. If Airbus became profitable faced with Boeing, American workers will submit to new attacks (moreover, today 7,000 job cuts have been announced) and after that European workers will again pay the cost. Each retreat by workers faced with capitalist demands can only prepare for new attacks more violent than the previous ones. There’s no other option possible for capitalism in crisis, and the only response it knows is always more job cuts and even more ferocious exploitation of the workers who have the “luck” to keep their job... for the moment.

**A single solution: unity and solidarity
of the whole working class!**

For the workers today hit by the measures of the Airbus management, there is no alternative but to struggle. In several Airbus factories they understood it immediately: from the announcement of the management’s plans, 1,000 workers at the Laupheim, in the south of Germany went on spontaneous strike, at the same time as those of Meaulte, in Picardy, stopped work; they only went back when the union told them that the factory wouldn’t be sold, which was a lie.

But the workers of Airbus are not alone in this struggle. All the exploited must feel solidarity faced with attacks that today rain down on aeronautical workers and that tomorrow will hit those in the motor industry, health, telecom, chemicals and all the other sectors.

It is necessary for workers everywhere to unite in sovereign general assemblies where they can discuss and decide the objectives and means of struggle. This struggle is the concern of the workers themselves. It is not the business of politicians whose promises are quickly forgotten. Neither is it the business of their “representatives”, the unions. The latter spend their time cultivating divisions between the workers, whether within the same firm or unit of production (as we see today at Toulouse where the speeches of the main union, Force Ouvriere, are aimed at setting “blue collar” workers against “white collar” office workers). Or they oppose workers from one country against workers from another, since the unions are first to wave the

nationalist rags. For the French unions at Airbus, with the same Force Ouvriere at their head, the workers should fight to obtain a “fairer sharing out of the sacrifices”; in other words, French workers should try to ensure that the German workers are hit still harder. And even when a union like IG Metall proposes a day of action by Airbus workers in different countries, to be held in mid-March, it is nothing but a manoeuvre to get ahead of any development of the consciousness that workers’ interests are not those of the national capital. In almost the same breath IG Metall issued a statement condemning strikes in the name of “responsibility”. Such a Europe-wide action is also a means of cultivating a “solidarity” between European Airbus workers that sets them against American Boeing workers who, in Autumn 2005, went on massive strikes against the bosses’ attacks.

The need for solidarity between all workers has already begun to be expressed, in particular through the spontaneous walk-outs in France and Germany. A little while ago, workers at Airbus in southern Spain, today under attack, gave their support to demonstrations of families of workers in the motor firm of Delphi, thrown out of work by the closure of the Puerto Real.

Faced with the appeals of the bosses to accept job cuts, lower wages and deteriorating conditions at work, one response: reject sacrifices which prepare the ground for even more brutal attacks! Only struggle pays!

Faced with attempts to divide workers by firm or by country, solidarity of all the working class!

Against isolation, which always means defeat, spread the struggles! Worker’s assemblies must send massive delegations to other firms so that all workers are part of the movement.

Faced with a tottering world capitalist system that will bring even more brutal attacks against all workers, in all sectors, in all countries, there is no other alternative for the working class than to fight back and to develop class solidarity. This is the only way to stand up against the aggravation of exploitation, against more and more inhuman conditions of life and work; it is also the only way to prepare for the overthrow of this system, which offers us nothing but poverty, war and barbarism.

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