

Who are we ?

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai (India) on November 19, 20, 21, 2016 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:

Innocent Assogba (Benin),
Alan Benjamin (USA),
Colia Clark (USA),
Constantin Cretan (Romania),
Berthony Dupont (Haiti),
Ney Ferreira (Brazil),
Daniel Gluckstein (France),
Rubina Jamil (Pakistan),
Apo Leung (China),
Gloria Gracida (Mexico),
M.A. Patil (India),
Mandlenkosi Phangwa (Azania),
Klaus Schüller (Germany),
Jung Sikhwa (Korea),
John Sweeney (Great Britain),
Mark Vassilev (Russia),
Nambiath Vasudevan (India).

(*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

Address to our sister and brother workers and youth in China

We are labour activists and defenders of democratic rights. We send our fraternal greetings to the workers and youth in China.

We wish to express our solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of youth and workers who have been marching in demonstrations in Hong Kong for the past four months, and with the hundreds of thousands who went on strike on 5 August and 2 and 3 September and imposed the withdrawal of the Extradition Bill on Carrie Lam.

We condemn the heavy-handed police crackdown on the protesters, the imprisonment of protesters and the implementation of an emergency law that gives authorities unlimited power against elementary civil liberties.

This emergency law was adopted in 1922 by the British colonial regime to break a seamen's strike. Thus, the Hong Kong authorities, and the Beijing government behind them, are using a law of the colonial powers which plundered China against the Chinese workers and youth. They should beware of the fact that in 1922, the seamen's general strike was victorious and prepared the way for the big strikes in Shanghai and Canton-Hong Kong in 1925.

We endorse the 7 August 2019 joint statement by 19 associations and organisations of Hong Kong, including the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions HKCTU: "At the same time, harassment and suppression of labour rights groups across the country has continued. (...) We demand that the Chinese government immediately and unconditionally releases the arrested labour rights activists and community service providers (...)".

We send our greetings to Meng Han, re-

cently released after having been arrested for the third time. We assure you of our unconditional solidarity with Fu Changguo, Wu Guijun, Zhang Zhiru, He Yuancheng, Wei Zhili and all the detained activists, all the students who supported these victims of arbitrary imprisonment.

Brothers and sisters of Hong Kong and mainland China,

We remain true to the tradition of the democratic and labour movement: civil liberties are indivisible; we remain true to the motto "*the workers right to independent organisation knows no borders*".

In our own country, workers and their organisations are preparing for a strike to defend our pensions system, which is being threatened by our government. In every country, workers' resistance is not only legitimate but essential for fighting back against exploitation and defending collective rights.

Workers have the right to organise as they see fit.

We received messages that bear witness to your struggle. We will maintain these exchanges and will therefore find the means to do so.

We will not give up. Long live workers' international solidarity!

This address was issued in Paris on 18 October 2019, on the occasion of the 22nd Solidarity Dinner with Chinese workers organised by the China Inquiry Commission, with, as guest of honour: Lee Cheuk-yan, General Secretary of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions.

CATALONIA
A human tide against the repression and for the Republic

To all those who said that it is dead and buried, the human tide that has surged and swept the country has answered: "The Catalan Republic is still here!"

On 14 October, nine Catalan leaders were placed on trial and given prison sentences of from 9 to 13 years for "*sedition*". It was a sentence handed down by the Supreme Court and in the name of the Penal Code that are both legacy of Franco's dictatorship, as are the Spanish monarchy and the 1978 Constitution.

The verdict provoked immense anger that quickly turned into mass demonstrations, at the call of the Committees for the Defence of the Republic (CDR) and associations such as the National Catalan Assembly (ANC) or Omnium Cultural. As of 17 October, the students union launched the demand for a strike. The human tide peaked on 18 October in Barcelona, the day of general strike launched by the "minority" trade unions. The leaders of CCOO (Workers Commissions) and UGT refused to call for strike

– all the while “*leaving their members free to participate*”, fearing to be in an awkward position vis-à-vis their own members.

There were endless crowds of marchers on the roads and motorways, sweeping finally into Barcelona, carrying banners and signs stating, “*Self-determination*”, “*Stop the repression*”, “*Free the political prisoners*”, “*Independence*”, “*Republic*” and “*We are not afraid*”. Groups of young people, often led by the CDR, cut off roads and blocked tollgates. There were more than half a million demonstrators in Barcelona, with the longshoremen on a strike that paralysed the port, but there were also strikes in high schools, transportation and industry. Students marched together behind a banner stating, “*Catalan Republic*”. They chanted “*We have not forgotten October 1st*”, “*Freedom*”, “*For the Catalan Republic of people and the youth*” and “*We will do it again*”, in reference to the referendum of October 1st 2017, in which the Catalan people expressed their desire to live in a Republic. It was in fact for this “crime” of October 1st that the nine leaders were sentenced. Following the speeches at the end of the demonstration, the crowd chanted “*General Strike!*” and “*Independence now!*” The crowd cheered at the reading of a letter sent from his

prison by Jordi Cuxiart, former president of Omnium Cultural, that ended as follows: “*Let us move forward, long live Freedom, long live the Republic!*”

The response from the monarchy and Pedro Sanchez’s “socialist” government was irrevocable: the police, along with the Mossos d’Esquadra (the autonomous Catalan police), charged and repressed. Over 110 people were injured.

But this time, throughout the Spanish State, the solidarity of the workers and the peoples expressed itself. In Madrid, as of 16 October and on the occasion of the demonstration by retired pensioners — who were marching by thousands for an increase in their pensions — many Catalan, Basque and Republican flags were to be seen. Then, over the next days, impressive demonstrations took place in Bilbao and Donostia in the Basque Country, and also in Andalusia, etc.

This new phase in the uprising of the Catalan people against the monarchy that was born of Francoism has, in return, led to a re-grouping of all the forces for the defence of the 1978 institutions. At the very announcement of the sentencing, the head of the government and of the “Socialist” Party, Pedro Sanchez, had the audacity to declare, “*No one has been sentenced for their ideas*”. Three days later he congratulated

the police for “maintaining law and order”. To his right, parties like the Partido Popular, Vox and Ciudadanos have demanded an upping of the repression. On the “left”, the leader of Podemos, Iglesias, has indicated to Sanchez that he can count on him if there is a need to “calm” the situation. On 19 October, Ada Colau the mayor of Barcelona, Roger Torrent, the president of the Catalan Parliament (member of ERC, the Republican Left) and representatives of the CCOO and the UGT of Catalonia, as well as representatives of the bosses, proposed to “*find a diplomatic solution to the conflict*”. The next day, leaders of the CCOO and the UGT, again along with the bosses, took a step further, with a “*united manifesto: Catalonia needs political, economic and social stability*”.*

But isn’t the only “democratic solution” the one that recognises that on the 1st of October 2017 the Catalan people chose to free themselves from the monarchy and to create a Catalan Republic, opening the way to the Free Union of the Republics of Spain? ■

* This consensus against the right of the Catalan people goes beyond the borders of the Spanish monarchy: on 6 November 2017, the president of the European Commission, Juncker, affirmed that, “*the solution resides in the constitutional and judicial order internal to Spain*”, thus giving a green light to the repression.

HUNGARY

“A labour candidate has been elected to the town council”

Judit Somi, internationalist labour activist

What balance sheet should be drawn after the 13 October municipal elections?

The bankruptcy of the system is flagrant: there is more and more abstention. At the national level, the voter turnout was announced at 47.89% (that includes void ballots). But in the towns that have been martyred by the disappearance of industry – for example the town of Bätönyterenyé (in the north of Hungary), voter participation fell to 40%. So we can say that more than one worker out of two no longer trusts in the fact that voting for this or that or such and such a candidate will change anything at all.

Who has won in these elections?

The opposition won in ten of the 23 biggest cities of the country, including the capital, Budapest, over the Fidesz

party – the party of the reactionary and authoritarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who had been in power since 2010. But let us specify: the opposition is a vast coalition that goes from the “Socialist” Party (MSZP) to the far right (Jobbik). The MSZP, which had been in power from 2002 to 2010, organised privatisations, made our country into a haven for multinationals and organised Hungary’s membership in the European Union and NATO.

As for Jobbik, it is a proto-fascist party that today is attempting to give itself a “respectable” face. Jobbik, the MSZP and Fidesz all have something in common: they are all well within the framework of the European Union and thus in the framework of privatisation and deregulation.

And you stood independent labour candidates in these elections?

Our campaign was modest, but we were the one and only force to campaign for labour unity. Our candidates were workers, activists of the left and Gypsies, all of whom were neither with the governmental party nor the coalition going from the far right to the liberals, “socialists” and their satellites.

In Bätönyterenyé, the working class town that has been devastated by unemployment, we won one of the eleven seats on the town council. The comrade who was elected is a socialist on the left, excluded from his party along with all of his cell. With these results, albeit modest, we have publicly demonstrated our existence. We are aware of the fact that this is not sufficient, and we mean to continue, creating circles of workers in order to aid in their fight. Our campaign was very tiring but very productive. ■