

Crisis in Spain

by Jim H.

Faced with a recent surge in unemployment (currently around 23% and youth unemployment at 40%); a push to downgrade working conditions through a "Labour reform" bill aimed at slashing severance payments making it easier for employers to stand down workers and impose individual contracts; the reduction of the wages of the public sector by 5 % for one month, with a one year wage freeze, the freezing of pensions; the imposition of funding cut backs; raising of the Value Added Tax (VAT); and cut backs across a range of important services, the working class of Spain is compelled to move and lead the nation in a wave of resistance.

Behind these reactionary measures are European imperialism and the section of the Spanish capitalist class aligned with European imperialism. Included in this is Jose Zapatero's Socialist Workers Party.

The European Union demands that Spain cut back its public expenditure by 1.75% of GDP (122 billion Euros) by

parts of the continent.

However it would be wrong to believe that the trend is confined to this section. The whole of Europe is involved. European imperialism is moving to attack the working people of the whole continent to pursue its own interests.

Other countries lined up for treatment are Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France, Britain, Holland, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Cyprus, Finland and Denmark. In all cases the same sort of reactionary measures are being or are intended to be imposed.

Spain's economy is significant, and developments there will have European repercussions. The short sighted reactionary push is much more likely to bring about further economic deterioration than produce any real benefits, even in capitalist terms.

That it comes about at all is mainly the result of the individual greed of monopoly capitalists than the collective interests, not only of society, but even of the monopoly capitalists themselves.

Meanwhile Zapatero's government finds itself in a very difficult place



Public sector workers in Madrid on 2 June

next year and 3% within the next three years. The demand is backed up by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The push is a means to impose the burden of the capitalist economic crisis on working people. It is deepening class divisions.

European imperialism, led by Germany and France, seeks to consolidate its position, as a hedge against further economic deterioration, and also, to put it in a stronger position to compete against its rival, US imperialism.

Weaker nations in the European Union are being squeezed. Consequently, the crisis is biting deeper here than in other

indeed.

On the one hand, it faces growing resistance from below. On the other, it seeks to serve European imperialism.

It is a government that came into office on the wave of popular opposition to the open reactionaries. Expectations from its support base have been high and its credibility is on the line.

Workers' resistance

On 28 May, rail workers went on strike in protest against the changes. This was followed by a strike of public service workers on 2 June, with street protests across cities and regional centres. In Madrid, over 2 million public servants took part in the strike action. A number

Editorial

Get out of Afghanistan now!

Immediately after she became Prime Minister, Julia Gillard hastened to reassure President Obama that Australia would continue to be a loyal puppet to US imperialism. This was her first priority and exposed the complete lack of dignity and independence in Australian foreign policy.

Gillard has pledged that Australia will maintain troops in Afghanistan, virtually as long as US imperialism wants them there. How long is this to be? Nobody knows. Australia's commitment is open-ended.

Obama and his generals have proposed a series of 'troop surges' to increase military strength beyond the 94,000 already there. Yet, in the same breath, they talk of a 'draw-down' from July 2011.

The other major ally of US imperialism, Britain, is now saying they want to withdraw by 2015. Others, such as the Dutch, are packing their bags to join the many countries that have already pulled out combat troops.

In the countries that contribute to the US occupation of Afghanistan, anti-war protests attract more and more support, including that of returned troops disgusted by the outright corruption of the Karzai regime and the feeling that this is an unjustified and unwinnable war.

In the United States, veterans from the war are particularly active in exposing the quagmire that American troops find themselves in, with endless tours of duty and no real confidence in the generals to look after them, either on the battlefield or if they suffer injury and are shipped home. And, speaking of the generals, the sacking of General Stanley McChrystal and his replacement by General David Petraeus has revealed deep-seated problems with the relationship between the political and military wings of US imperialism.

In spite of all the firepower, the technology, the drones and so on, the US is barely hanging on to a few main cities and towns, surrounded by a sea of hostility and resistance. They have failed to learn the lessons of history which defeated both the British and later, the Russian efforts at suppressing the Afghan people's aspirations for national independence. Furthermore, they have failed to learn from their own history in Vietnam, where their military might was used to prop up a succession of vicious and corrupt puppets, but was finally swept away by people's war.

Why, then does US imperialism persist? It really has little to do with Afghanistan being a "terrorist training ground".

More accurate reasons are Afghanistan's strategic significance and the discovery by the Pentagon of massive deposits of iron, copper, cobalt, gold and industrial metals such as lithium, in remote and uncontrolled regions of the country. Of course, the Pentagon is assisting the Afghan Ministry of Mines to organise mineral rights with multinational mining companies.

The imperative for imperialism is to expand or sink. Are they really going to walk away from all this wealth?

As long as Australia is chained to the interests of US imperialism, more young Australians will die protecting foreign monopoly profits. Australians don't support this shabby war.

Bring the troops home now!

of pickets were set up, such as the one that blocked off Barcelona's port.

A general strike had been scheduled for 2 June, but this was called off by union leaders in exchange for discussions with the government. Few expect that this will meet with any success.

A general strike has now been called for 9 September, which will coincide with European wide strike and protest action against the imposition of austerity programs across the continent.

Signs are that working class struggle is developing. Thus is vitally important for the world. Europe is the most

important focal centre for the rise of the global anti-imperialist struggle. Consequently, the developments in Spain and across Europe will impact on all corners of this planet, not only in terms of the global economic crisis, but in terms of the resistance by the world's peoples.

A new political wave is developing. Just as in the case of Greece, the whole world is watching.

What makes these developments doubly important is that the situation is not unique to Spain. Other countries are heading down the same road.

Resistance will spread.