

Statement

Political crisis in Belgium: The workers' movement must make its voice heard and impose its own solutions!

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After the vote in parliamentary commission on the splitting of the bilingual electoral district Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV) and the suspension (provisional?) of the negotiations for the formation of an orange-blue government, it has become still more obvious that the dominant class and its political parties, in the North and the South, have shown themselves incapable of managing a crisis that they have largely contributed to creating and deepening.

Indeed, workers and those on benefits whether they are Walloon, Flemish or from Brussels, should not pay the price for this situation. But it is surely them who will be in the line of fire on two fronts!

First, with attacks on the right to strike, on pensions, on unemployment benefits, on working conditions, contained in the agreements already agreed or to come of the - still probable — orange-blue government.

Secondly, from the absence of any public measure seeking to counter the current degradation of living standards, following the catastrophic increase in prices (basis foodstuffs, rents, energy). Increases which hit all workers hard but particularly the most modest households and which are absolutely not compensated for by the index.

The organised workers' movement in this country thus has a primary responsibility to defend social conquests like Social Security and the right to work. A regionalisation of health care, for example, would inevitably open the way to its privatisation. But it is not enough to stay on the defensive, the present situation also requires that offensive demands be advanced for another division of wealth, one which privileges Labour and not Capital.

The workers' movement should not defend a retrograde Belgian centralism, not should it support the reactionary nationalisms; it should on the contrary advance and impose its own solutions to the crisis, in the most absolute independence from the dominant class and its political agenda.

In this sense and despite its contradictions, a positive approach has already been taken by the trade union sectors with the petition "Save solidarity". But that is not enough, it is necessary to massively mobilise the workers in the street so as to impose the solutions of the workers' movement. It is necessary to draw up a programme of offensive demands in a common front on the question of wages, living and working conditions and so on

The LCR-SAP argues then

1. That the General Federation of Belgian Labour and the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions jointly organise a national mobilising demonstration for the defence and extension of the social conquests of the workers

2. A national common conference of the delegates and activists of the Federation and Confederation so as to adopt a programme of struggle and offensive demands like :

- the full re-nationalisation of the energy sector
- the public control of housing prices
- the re-establishment of a genuine index: suppression of the health index
- The suppression of VAT on goods of primary necessity
- a minimum wage of 1,500 euros net/month
- An end to the presents being given to the employers
- Hands off the right to strike!
- an emergency tax on big fortunes.

P.S.

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* The SAP-LCR is the Belgian section of the Fourth International, (in Flemish Socialistische Arbeiderspartij and in French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire).