

# STRIKE

Newsletter of ZSP Warsaw



Strike 19 March 2011

## Campaign against Exploitation and Abuse in OTTO Workforce

OTTO Workforce is a temporary agency operating in several European countries. (It also owns the Olympia temp agency.) One of the things it does is recruits workers from low-wage Central European countries like Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia to work in Holland. Some Polish workers who were cheated by OTTO wanted to fight back and started a campaign together with us, the Dutch federation the Vrije Bond (Free Union) and our sister organization, Priama Akcia from Slovakia.

There are lots of different problems in OTTO. One of the main ones is the system of fining workers. They can receive yellow or red cards and this happens particularly often out of working hours, in the company housing. We have heard numerous stories of abuse related to these fines. They are put on workers for all sorts of reasons and even put on people who had nothing to do with any incident. For example, a couple of workers who were put in housing where the fire alarm was broken were unjustly charged for breaking it. All four people living there each had 400 euros deducted from their salaries for the damage. The security guards who police OTTO housing like to fine people for all sorts of nonsense. One former worker complained that one time a co-worker was drinking in the common space. He was a little drunk and the others were annoyed and tried to get him to go to his room. The security came and the drunk guy spilled his beer. All the people in the room were fined and had deductions from their salary.

This kind of policing during people's private time is completely unacceptable! All the more so since the workers have no possibility of appealing against this and if they complain, they are punished further!



*We have our eye on you!*

One of the main problems lies in the fact that the workers are more or less forced to live in premises run by OTTO. They pay a lot of money for it and the price is the same, regardless of the location or the standard. Workers often have to pay 250 euros a month to share a crowded place with 3 other people, while the value of such housing might be much lower. Some of the housing is in summer bungalows in the woods or even in containers. These places are sometimes quite miserable and are usually overpriced. OTTO earns money on this racket and, at the same time that it forces people into pathological conditions, it attempts to keep strict control over them, earning more money through its scummy disciplinary routine.

We have also heard that some people who moved out and found their own accommodations were „no longer needed” or told they had to move back for “logistical reasons”.



Besides this, there are other fines and unethical practices. Some people explained how they were fooled into signing things and then were fined. For example, one person was told that there was no more work, so he should sign something saying he quit. Then he was fined 500 euro for breaking the contract early. People who are thrown out of OTTO housing or who quit because of problems with OTTO have also found they were fined.

Our two IWA sections and the Vrije Bond thus started an informational campaign and protests at OTTO offices. Protests have been held three times in Warsaw, in Krakow, Opole, Gliwice and Wroclaw in Poland, in Olomouc in the Czech Republic, in Bansko Brystrica and Presov in Slovakia and in the Hague in Holland during the grand opening of their new office. The management of OTTO is well aware and very sensitive to this action, specially sending people to do PR in Gliwice and Opole, the two actions in Poland which were publically announced. Those people try to convince the media that nothing is wrong and that, for some odd reason, the workers just don't go to them to solve problems.

Finally, the CEO of OTTO flew into Poland to meet with some affected workers at the Wroclaw office, the main headquarters in Poland. He explained for a long time why the workers claims were not right, why what they said happened couldn't have or shouldn't have happened and complained that they organized protests instead of just talking with OTTO staff. He promised to investigate the claims and let them know, but in the end, blew them off and did not call them back.

This is the reality for OTTO workers: they are cheated and when they complain, they are either harrassed or fired, or just ignored.

But some of them have decided to fight back!

We will continue this campaign and demand that the workers are paid what they are owed and that conditions change in this company!

More actions are planned. In the meanwhile, the informational actions aimed at workers are continuing in Holland, Slovakia and Poland. The comrades from Priama Akcia already have had quite good results: a very large amount of people have read their article and people have even contacted them saying that they decided not to work with OTTO because of what they learned.

OTTO WE ARE WATCHING YOU!

### **Actions at OBI for Better Working Conditions and Against Union Repression!**



ZSP Warsaw organized a few pickets at two OBI building supply stores in our city. A few of us also made some visits to the shops to discretely speak with workers about the campaign.

At the end of last year, a union was formed in one OBI shop where a couple of comrades worked. The company responded with repression against the union. So far, one unionist was fired, another did not have his contract renewed (also fired) and one was threatened with dismissal. In another store, somebody who spoke about organizing got a disciplinary

warning. This is typical for OBI. They busted the first union in this chain in Poland in 2001 and no unions were formed until this one at the end of 2010. The management has a known reputation for mobbing. And this anti-union behaviour is also well-known in other countries such as Germany. For this reason we appealed to FAU to take action in Germany as well. The result were some pickets and an international day of action on Feb.26 when actions were held in almost 20 cities in Germany and Poland.



The day of action was well-received by workers. The mainstream union, however, seeing this success, tried to make capital on it. We received word that OBI management called them in to have a talk about the day of action. While they tried to use this event for their benefit, they were very quick to disassociate themselves from these protests, from FAU and ZSP and even signed some statement attesting to the fact that they had nothing to do with this.

As we understand, all OBI management throughout Poland is aware of these actions and most of the workers as well. A couple of pickets were held after this day of action and protestors found that the management already knew what is ZSP and why there were there.

We will reiterate some of the main demands of the workers, gathered from our comrades and people from different shops who have been networking (and hopefully will do more organizing): - to get a pay increase of 125 euros a month - to stop pay discrimination against women - to end harrassment of unionists - to replace old machines (ie forklifts) that cause industrial accidents and improve health and safety conditions - to stop hiring people through temp agencies while reducing full-time jobs.

In addition to this, there is a special demand about the introduction of electronic salespeople. The firm has used this as a way to scare people, trying to convince them they will be replaced by robots. The workers don't want these giant computerized dolls to replace them and see them as a giant waste of money.

We can also report that one electronic saleswomen in Warsaw suffered an „industrial accident” herself, showing not only is it dangerous to work in OBI, but it is dangerous to fuck with the workers!





## Against the Decimation of the Post Office! Workers and people, organize and fight!

Poczta Polska has decided to attack workers and users of the post office once again! They plan on firing at least 5000 people and on changing the contracts of 90,000 employees to worse working conditions! Postal workers already have poor conditions. Most post offices are badly organized by bureaucrats (whose working conditions are never hit) or understaffed or underfunded. This hurts not only the workers, but the users as well, who have to stand in long lines. This is especially difficult for the elderly, who are more dependent on the postal services for things like receiving their pensions and paying bills.

The response of the post office? Plans to liquidate 3000 post offices in the next few years. Apparently they suppose that most people should buy stamps and pay bills at the supermarket where they plan to set up their services.

We say that the post is a vital service, even in these days of changing technologies. We absolutely do not accept that employees, that do not have great conditions to begin with, are forced to accept wage decreases or worse conditions so that the post office produces more profit for the people at the top.

ZSP Warsaw sends its message of solidarity to our comrades in the post office and workers who want to fight! We will participate in the March 16 postal workers demo in Warsaw and call on the community to show its support!

## Stop the Exploitation of Foreign Workers! Stop Outsourcing Abuse! ZSP Warsaw Condemns the Outrageous Situation in Czech Forests

ZSP Warsaw has sent a protest to Czech National Forests and the contracting firm Less & Forest about the outrageous exploitation of foreign workers in the Krkonose National Park and other Czech Forests.

The Czech National Parks are outsourcing their forestry work through public tenders, even though much money is given to them by the European Union for this work. The main contractor which won the tenders, Less & Forest a.s, in 2009 outsourced work to another company, called Affumicata a.s. The owners of Affumicata had previously been involved in a fraud against Vietnamese workers where they showed them fake government contracts, collected big money from them for fees, took their passports and never provided them with jobs or gave the passports back. Then they were subcontracted by Less & Forest and they decided to hire Vietnamese, Mongolian and Slovak workers for the forestry contracts. Needless to say, they cheated these people as well, not giving salaries and not paying for their accommodation.

When this fraud became known, the owners of Affumicata started new business called Madera servicio and Wood Service Praha. They were then subcontracted by Less & Forest in 2010 to do the work in Krkonose State Park. They needed to find new victims, so they started to recruit in Romania. Using another company called PBM Union Jobs, they claimed that they would send people to work in Spain, but instead they wound up cheated in Krkonose.

This whole fraud is now known in the Czech Republic. We have

an English translation of a more detailed article on our portal [www.pracownik.net.pl](http://www.pracownik.net.pl) and several articles in Vietnamese can be found here: [www.zspviet.blogspot.com](http://www.zspviet.blogspot.com)

We are asking other unions, forestry workers, immigrants and others to send a protest to Czech Forests. Below is a model fax / e-mail :

To: Lesy České republiky, s. p.  
Přemyslova 1106,  
Hradec Králové 8, 50168

Fax: 495262391  
E-mail: [lesyacr@lesyacr.cz](mailto:lesyacr@lesyacr.cz)

Less a.s  
Bohdaneč 136, PSČ 285 25  
Fax: +420 327 311 775

## STOP EXPLOITATION OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN CZECH FORESTS!

We are writing about the scandalous exploitation of immigrant workers in Czech Forests. The contractor Less & Forest subcontracted work to firms that cheated workers from Vietnam, Mongolia, Slovakia and Romania. Nobody feels legally responsible and puts all the blame on the subcontractor, but the whole system of organizing work in such a way is to blame!

We demand that Lesy Ceske republiky take responsibility for labour conditions! No more profiteering at the expense of the workers!

We demand that Less & Forest also take responsibility. It earns money from outsourcing work to even cheaper firms which don't even pay their workers!

We call on Lesy Ceske republiky not to use the services of Less & Forest or the bandits connected to Affumicata, Madera servicio or any other company formed by this gang.

Take responsibility and pay the people for the hard work that they have done!





### Tenants Struggle Continues. Conflicts with Local Government

In Warsaw, desperate tenants continue to strike and organize. But there is little dramatic action and now the struggle is categorized by defending individual tenants and buildings against eviction, rising rents or landlord harassment and spreading the word and gathering people. A number of public meetings were held in different neighbourhoods. At the last one, on March 5, over 150 people attended to learn how to defend themselves against what is happening. We strongly encourage people to get more actively involved and stress that we need hundreds of people out in the streets in a mass movement to make more of an impact. We also need people to act in solidarity when something is happening to their neighbours, such as when they face eviction.

A break in protest activity was probably necessary to regather forces but ZSP will call for people to get back in the streets this spring and to make the struggle more visible than ever! Actions are planned for March 9 in Warsaw and Wrocław, where our comrades have also started a successful tenant group called Tenants' Action. (Following is a statement for this occasion.)

This time we will also make it more publically known that we are encouraging squatting of empty flats. Some symbolic public squatting action is planned to give people this idea.

We are still involved with a great conflict with our local government, whose policies and practices are leading to this human crisis. In particular, the neoliberals, who are now in a majority in the city council and have no real opposition, committed some outrageous acts in January. In the north Praga district, where the neoliberals are not in such a good position, one of them was appointed chairwomen of one council session just after elections. She called a break and did not renew the session. Therefore the councilpeople could not make appointments within the statutory time limit and the President of the city set up a „provisional” board of her people instead. The woman, who was still the chair of the session, kept playing this scummy manoeuvre throughout January and we went to create disturbances and express our contempt of these power plays. The City Council was supposed to deal with this, but the neoliberals in charge decided to boycott the session and simply did not show up. There was no quorum and nothing could be voted on. (Details of this are one the ZSP Warsaw blog [www.zspwawa.blogspot.com](http://www.zspwawa.blogspot.com))



People are absolutely disgusted and see clearly that instead of working, or even pretending to be working, the politicians are just playing power games to destroy their opposition. ZSP issued a statement saying that we never wanted these politicians in the first place, so they might as well stay home and let the people get about self-organizing to run the city without them.

### PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE! DOWN WITH THE POLITICIANS AND BUREAUCRATS! POPULAR CONTROL IMMEDIATELY!

Związek Syndykalistów Polski declares that the public housing authorities, in acting against the interest of tenants for the benefit of the corrupt bureaucratic apparatus, for the benefit of landlords and property speculators, are enemy entities which need to be eliminated. The answer is not in replacing them with a new set of bureaucrats as the system of unchecked power is bound to always produce more or less the same results.

Tenants! It is time to take control of our own fates!

The problem we all face was well-illustrated in an example given at a recent public meeting in Praga Południe. One tenant explained how tenants, fed up with living in a house with a crumbling and disgusting entrance, proposed that they take some money out of their rent and fix the entrance themselves. The bureaucrats said no but did nothing to repair the problems. Thus the relation is that the administration takes money and does nothing. All tenants know that, if they could decide things, a lot more would be done to keep houses in good repair, instead of putting money into the pockets of useless bureaucrats or their friends and families who earn money off overcharging for different contracts.

Tenants, it is time to put an end to this system! It is time to put the people responsible for our everyday misery out of a job!

While thousands of us are living without heat, in crumbling flats which might collapse on us,



with mold all over, crowded into slums, the administration wastes public money and turned public housing into ruins. Their only plan is a diabolic one of nearly eliminating public housing, privatizing it, evicting the elderly and poor, pushing them into the margins. They are destroying the lives of thousands of people! Are we going to stand by and let them do this, are we going to wait, as individuals until it is our turn to be thrown out before we cry out: enough! Our will we unite with our neighbours and take things into our own hands?

ZSP declares that it does not recognize the legitimacy of the bureaucrats to decide and calls for the creation of popular control of public housing. On March 9 we will confront the authorities and reach out again to the people with this message.

We also declare that we will help any person who needs housing to find an empty flat or building and call on people to squat these places. In upcoming weeks we will take action to realize such plans in a couple of flats and we will act decisively against any attempts to remove or harass those who have occupied these wasted spaces.

**TENANTS UNITE IN  
STRUGGLE! HOUSING IS A  
RIGHT, NOT A COMMODITY!**



### Confrontation against Frontex

On Jan. 17, on the 97th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, a conference on migration policy was held at the Kazimierowski Palace featuring keynote speakers Ilkka Laitinen, Executive Director of Frontex and former British Home Secretary Charles Clarke and attended by various Eurocrats and migrant hunters. Although we found out about this only at the last minute, some people from ZSP and RAS (Radical Solidarity Action) were able to get into the closed conference and made an extended confrontation.



Frontex chief Laitinen was particularly confronted about recent actions at the Greek-Turkish border, including incidents of shooting at migrants and press reports that a few people left their work there because they refused to shoot migrants. Laitinen denied everything, calling it a pack of lies and refused to answer questions about deaths of migrants. The debate got hot, with one woman from RAS and one from ZSP shouting Laitinen down. The member of ZSP pointed out the way in which Frontex was militarized and the controversy around this. There was no intervention by security. Both Clarke and Laitinen refused to address the questions and called critics of Frontex anarchists.

### Women and Labour in the Realm of Capital

*Laure Akai*

#### The Position of Labour in Poland in the Prism of Neoliberal Ideology

The relation of workers to capital is crystal clear: their goal is to produce surplus (profit) for those investing money, to improve the quality of those people's lives and to increase their power to own, invest and control. The neoliberal dogma instilled in people convince them that this is a natural relation. Moreover, workers are led to believe that the capitalists are doing them a favour by „creating jobs”. We are taught that we must beg and compete with others for work, then comply with all the demands or whims of the bosses to remain in employment. Our very material existence depends on our willingness and ability to satisfy the needs of our employers. Our own needs are usually put on hold or forsaken.

The „solution” to this proposed by society which has accepted this scheme is that each worker should try to get special skills which would enable him or her to get a better position in the pecking order. This is the false solution of an individualized society which seeks to remedy social problems through individual exceptions to mass misery while keeping the problem in tact. In this sense, the individualized mentality is not only convenient for capital but is a cornerstone of economic hierarchy.

That a mass problem exists should be obvious in Poland where most working people live on subsistence wages, with little surplus while some portion satisfy themselves with the extra rewards of modern labour – small comforts which they have paid dearly for. Furthermore, as the public

sector has come under attack by vultures scavenging for profits on the corpses of public health, education and housing, huge portions of society find themselves without access to adequate health services, with little chance to have a decent and secure roof over their head and faced with the chance that they will not be able to afford higher education for their children. Yet such problems are often described as some particular local misfortune and are blamed on bad organization, thieving politicians and public administrators. As the ultimate expression of twisted consciousness, these problems are also blamed on the workers themselves, who supposedly are at fault for their own situation.

The ideology we are fed deliberately divides workers and convinces layers of better-positioned ones that the problem of poverty is one of a lack of individual motivation, having nothing to do with the system.

Breaking through this ideological stupor, one can easily see its falsity. We can look at the undervalued labour of various professions and dismantles these myths. The situation of nurses is quite a good example. There is absolutely nothing wrong with their labour. They have worked hard to prepare themselves for their profession, they do a very tough and necessary job – yet they earn very little. It is absolutely clear that the problem is the undervaluing of their labour in Poland.

The undervaluing of this labour is directly linked to the ideology which places no value on anything which is not a profit-producing vehicle for business. Thus all work which is done for the basic benefit of people, not for the benefit of business, is relegated to the margins, its workers forced on low wages and told to be compensated by the knowledge they are „doing something good“.



It is no coincidence that in Poland, like in many other countries, such jobs are held by women to a disproportionate degree. Workers in these professions are thus put in hardship and must fight for their dignity and better compensation for their labour. However the difficulty of this is enormous. In a private conversation, one of the leaders of the nurses' union once lamented that there is a problem with both inspiring militance among women and being treated seriously. Nurses have been known to organize strong protests, showing outstanding commitment and courage – yet they do not have the „force“ of workers in other sectors. It seems that some have understood the word „force“ to mean physical force; one conjures up images of miners fighting with the police or shipyard workers burning tires in the middle of the road. But the reality may be somewhat different.

Nurses are in a difficult situation. Since they do not want to hurt people, they may strike not leaving the beds of the patients. But ultimately, if they did leave the beds of the patients, they would only be hitting the working classes. The rich are in private clinics, as well as the politicians who destroy the system. The key to a successful struggle then is widespread social support and action against the political and

economic system causing the problem. This is however sorely lacking in our society.

### **The Position of Women in Labour and the Labour Movement: Is it Something Specific?**

One might be tempted to argue that the position of the nurses has nothing to do with their gender, but rather to do with the nature of their work and capital's relation to it. However there is no denying that women wind up in undervalued jobs much more often than men. Then it is a question about how such people, faced with material deprivation and insecurity, can go about improving their condition.

It is also worth pointing out that all statistics and surveys show that even when women find themselves in slightly better employment, they earn much less than men and are more inclined to accept other unfavourable conditions.

Sociologists, feminists and other observers point to many decisive factors such as a lack of assertiveness amongst women or some silent resignation to the fact that they are to pick up the slack and do more work, something learned from the classic paradigm of the Polish household where Mother did most of the housework and knew that complaining about it would be „unpleasant“. This unequal relation of labour in the home is still commonplace, despite many transformations in society and the acceptance of such a scheme is the pattern for attitudes towards women and their labour.

Another tendency is to avoid conflict, which, although not strictly related to gender, is a pressure many women feel acutely. Yet the essence of the labour struggle is the eternal conflict between employer and employee. It is only through conflict that the employee may begin to fight for her or his



interests. And one must be able to feel strength, as this struggle is often with those who possess considerably more power.

Some understanding of the specific situation of many women in the labour market may be helpful for us to think of what we need to do to overcome certain barriers in organizing. These specifics may be overgeneralized or may be more or less relevant in different areas, but, regardless of these details, we must deal with the following facts: that women are more often in undervalued jobs or are underpaid; that women, although unionized, have not had the same success as men in forcing their demands through labour struggles; the labour movement is still disproportionately male dominated.

### **The Anarchosyndicalist Movements: Addressing the Problem**

Obviously, the problem of gender disproportion in any union or group may be dependent on many factors such as the society, branch, composition of existing members or their attitude or approach. But overall, the gender gap is obvious. Furthermore, although some groups have good participation of women, we find in general that many of the responsible functions are predominantly held by men.

One can make many theories about what is responsible for this situation, but ultimately the answer is most likely to be slightly different in the different groups. In Poland we have discussed this issue many times and we tend to identify the following as being real factors in this situation:

- past experience of sexism in the anarchist movement and history of anarchafeminists moving away from anarchists towards liberal feminists and social democracy
- general absence or low participation of working women in social life due to pressures of work and family responsibilities
- some guys have certain sexist attitudes towards women, not taking them seriously, or

viewing them just as potential girlfriends and even where if the people in the group are not this way, this pattern is taught and is a repeated dynamic in social life –some groups promote an old-fashioned vision of what it is to be a „worker“, conjuring up images of coal miners and (male) factory workers, making them the main subject of the struggle

Although the situation in Poland is quite specific and, for certain reasons worse than in many places, undoubtedly some of these factors are present elsewhere. So the question is, what are we going to do about it?

Obviously, it is going to take more than just paying attention to who the subject of the struggles are. Although this is a start. As women become more prominent in this, the ideas about who can be active in a labour struggle changes and women may identify more with the stories they hear. But also we have got to confront the practices we have, for example, at our meetings, which may be alienating for women or discourage their participation. The same would be true for any other type of person who might be problems integrating into the organizational culture for any reason: younger or older people, foreigners, outsiders not connected into any social networks which might be present in a group.

International Women's Day is now a century old. A century has passed and while women have made great progress in some areas, there is still a lot to be done. On this occasion, I personally would like to reflect on the state of things in our movement and think of what we can do to not only facilitate the participation of women but also to encourage their more active role. Hopefully this anniversary will also remind many of the comrades around the world that our movement, in general, is faced with this challenge.

### **Call Center Action**

On February 1 ZSP started an information active about illegal temporary work contracts at the Call Center of Bank Millennium in Warsaw. According to the labour law, the work done by the employees at the Call Center should entitle them to permanent contracts but the bank keeps signing temporary ones.

One worker who demanded a permanent contract was fired but went to court to establish his employment relation. This is how we know of the situation. The worker asked for solidarity. ZSP thought that it would be good to phone the 24-hour Call Center using its free line and to talk to people.

People calling encouraged the people to organize, explained the differences between forms of contracts, etc. People were also advised to read the Pracownik portal there is practical information on the subjects of contracts, the legal process and the direct organization of the workers.

Soon after we started the action, leftist activists from one of the mainstream unions copied the action and essentially took it over. This is not the first time that the big unions follow in our footsteps and watch what we do for ideas (and to try and stop our contacts with the workers).

### **INFOSHOP HAS TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY!**

The Infoshop in Warsaw, home to ZSP, the Tenants' Defense Committee, our Library and bookshop, is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary on March 15!

It was opened by activists of the former Anarchist Federation (FA Praga section) in 2001 and was for years located on the other side the National Station, before moving to its present location. It is all-volunteer run and is supported by donations.

## Against Exploitation and Repression of Unionists at Carrefour

On Jan. 23, ZSP made a slide show on the walls of the central Carrefour



supermarket in Warsaw. With such actions, we try to call people's attention to the problems of working conditions in the supermarket, or to problems related to agricultural workers or the corporate food industry. This time we also remembered about our comrade from Spain, Indira, who was fired from Carrefour Express in Pilar de Horadada.

### Letter to Carrefour: Improve Working Conditions at Carrefour! Enough Repression of Unionists!



In general we consider the working conditions in Carrefour to be inadequate. Above all the workers suffer from precarious jobs and low salaries. In the supermarkets in Poland, there are problems with the organization of the working day. Many people have part-time contracts and cannot get a permanent one. Carrefour has even been known to sign "temporary" contracts for up to ten years and sometimes they do not extend people's contracts when they are supposed to become permanent. They hire workers through temp agencies and subcontractors instead of creating full-time employment.

In the supermarkets in Warsaw, the salaries are too low to cover the cost of living in the capital. Moreover, in the Wilenska store, the working environment is very bad, not only for the workers, but also for the customers who suffer from a lack of space in the market. Due to the permanent understaffing in this supermarket, there is always too much work for the cashiers, who have to deal with nervous clients.

Despite good financial results and enormous profits, Carrefour is laying off workers throughout Poland and putting more work on the shoulders of the rest. There are also cases of

repression of unionists when the workers organize - for example the case of Adam Walkowiak in Lublin last year. The ZSP also protests against the repression in Spain of the CNT delegate in Carrefour Express in Pilar de Horadada, Indira Martinez. We demand her reinstatement and an end to union repression in Carrefour.

### ZSP-IWA Warsaw

### الثورة لمصر

### Revolution for Egypt - Speech at Demo at Egyptian Embassy in Warsaw made by members of ZSP

The human urge for freedom and dignity burns intensely in Egypt. We support this urge for change, for greater freedom and a chance to shape ones own life. Only we ask the question: what next? Will the Egyptian people exchange one authoritarian, unaccountable leader for another with a shorter term in office? Or just transfer power from a narrow group of rulers to a wider one? Or will the people take, for themselves, more direct control over their lives, creating community and workplace decision-making practices? Will the people settle for regime change and then become passive observers for the rest of their lives? Will freedom come to mean the absence of governmental and religious invigilation and control, or will it only be a symbolic gesture? Will changes to the economy mean more of the same: property in the hands of the wealthy, with the great masses slaving in poverty? Or will it mean common ownership and equal distribution?

The people in Poland remember the time when „freedom” was one of the main slogans of a movement, when the masses inspired to make changes ought for regime change - and won.

But what happened next with many of the postulates of the movement should be a warning for all. Instead of having more control in the workplace, we have only symbolic representation. Instead of mass improvement of living conditions for all, we have thriving elites and widespread poverty. Instead of giving the next generation hope of a better life, they are burdened and stressed by competition, uncertainty and class disadvantages. Instead of working in dignity, we beg for crumbs from our employers and accept all sort of

humiliation to survive in this economy. And instead of creating a more just society, we have created one of the have and have nots, with growing misery for the poor.

Politically, we have traded one band of authoritarian rulers for cliques of cronies who stay in power for decades, we have traded political disenfranchisement for political passivity and ambivalence.

Our wish for the people of Egypt and all that follow is to do a better job fighting and not give up your potential power to the next band of leaders claiming they have solutions for you! Organize yourself: in neighbourhood committees, in workplace unions and councils, in regional federations, even at the international level. Keep the power as close to the ground as possible - decide things with direct democracy, in open assemblies, not by choosing leaders who do not answer to you! Any people you delegate, your answer directly to the people, to the decisions they make amongst themselves on the most basic level! Do not allow yourself to be governed, because to be governed means to lose your freedom!

Egyptian people! The sign of true progress is the movement towards real equality: material and social. The „revolution” is nothing if it does not move the great masses of the Egyptian poor out of poverty, humiliation and misery into a position of being equal, not only with equal rights, but with equal life conditions.

Egyptian people! Rise up, but not only against your current political leadership! Organize against the bosses that enslave you and the system that keeps your masses in poverty and want.

Long live freedom and revolution - real revolution, not regime change! Real freedom - direct democracy, without bosses or governors!

[internationalworkersassociation.blogspot.com](http://internationalworkersassociation.blogspot.com)

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