

NOTE

From Greece to China

N L writes :

Restructuring taken out of the hide of labour is exacting a toll worldwide. Serious tensions have come to the surface among the 16 countries that use the Euro as their currency. Especially troubled is Greece, where Wall Street firms helped the previous government cover up deficit spending exceeding Eurozone rules. Germany is demanding an austerity programme, to protect the Euro's value. At the cost of possibly renewing recession in Europe, Germany's Prime Minister Angela Merkel sees this crisis as an opportunity to extract concessions from workers in Europe's weaker economies, robbing from paychecks, pensions and social services to give to Corporates. Workers in Greece are fighting for the workers of Europe-if the rulers succeed in imposing austerity in Greece, other countries are sure to follow.

Greece's Socialist Party government is complying, sparking a series of strikes, occupations and protests. Three general strikes were held in February and March, with slogans such as, "Workers shouldn't pay for the bankers' crisis," and, "We must become their crisis". Workers fired from the privatized Olympic Airlines occupied the State Accounting Office for 10 days. This was joined by municipal workers during their four-day strike, in which workers occupied garbage collection centres throughout the country. Temporary public workers, textile workers and electrical workers have engaged in occupations and strikes. Students have supported labour with occupations on college campuses.

China, less hurt by the Great Recession, shows a different side, as the new station for manufacturing capital shifted from deindustrialising countries-yet labour revolt there is widespread and frequent. Since the 1974-75 recession, people have experienced two generations of worldwide capitalist restructuring. Workers still employed have paid through their own impoverishment for corporate "prosperity". The uprooting of production far exceeds last century's movement of the textile industry to Southern mill towns. US multinationals have been shored up by the sweat of workers in China and elsewhere, profiting from substandard wages as well as from the costs of workers' safety and environmental devastation. The January strike at Wintek in Suzhou was not only over the threat of losing bonus pay, but against the killer chemical *n-hexane* used to clean the screens destined for Apple. Recapitulating what Marx labeled "so-called primitive accumulation" of capital, displaced workers from rural provinces, "undocumented" without legal rights, have erected the infrastructure of modern China. Even as the army of the unemployed has ballooned to 200 million, young workers, especially teenage girls, have had a lifetime of labour squeezed out of them in just a decade to fuel 20 years of China's hothouse economic expansion. As yet another expression of capitalism's laws of development, state-capitalist China hosting multinational capital is no model for humanity to follow if people are to have a future. □□□