

Spanish anti-austerity protests spread to more cities

Our reporters
31 May 2011

On Sunday evening thousands of protesters voted to continue the occupation of Madrid's Puerta del Sol square, in the "tent city" established in the immediate aftermath of the mass demonstration on May 15.

Voting to stay, protesters chanted, "We are not going! We are not going!"

The rally was the culmination of some 120 protests held in the capital over the weekend. Protests are also continuing in Spain's major cities and towns including Barcelona, Seville, Valencia and Logrono.

The AFP agency reported a Puerta del Sol protest spokesman who said, "We have started something in Sol. We have started to spread to the rest of the world, so this is not the time to stop it. The support we received internationally was very important, it was something that moved us in Sol, especially the mobilisation in Paris was a very big support, and also the mobilisation in Greece".

"For the moment we are here indefinitely. We will decide depending on events", he added.

Those gathered also observed a minute's silence in tribute to those who faced vicious police and "political oppression" repression during the protests, including in Barcelona's Plaza de Catalunya. On Friday, police in Barcelona were instructed to clear the square, using the pretext of Saturday evening's football Champions League final between FC Barcelona and Manchester United at Wembley. Around 120 people were injured during the assault by riot police, who attacked peaceful protesters with batons and tear gas and fired rubber bullets.

Following the attack, several thousand protesters returned to Plaza de Catalunya and the protest

continued there over the weekend.

The protests arose due to popular anger over the austerity measures imposed by the Socialist Party (PSOE) government. This has particularly affected young people, who face unemployment levels of nearly 50 percent. The vast majority of *los indignados* (the angry ones) participating in the Puerta del Sol demonstrations are young people.

The initial mass protests were initiated by a number of Internet-led campaigns. The camp city is comprised of numerous "collectives", including feminist and environmental groups and the "Real Democracy Now—DYR" group. The "city" includes stalls where legal advice can be obtained, and there is also a communications area, catering and cleaning facilities as well as a library.

Protests inspired by the "M-15" movement have taken place in various European countries in the last week, including Italy, France, Germany, Britain, and Belgium. In Greece 30,000 protested nationally last week, including 15,000 in Athens, in opposition to the austerity programme being imposed by the social democratic PASOK government. On Sunday around 24,000 people gathered in Athens' central Syntagma Square. A demonstration of about 1,500 took place in the Northern Greek city of Thessaloniki.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to Tania, who attended the Madrid assembly. She is a member of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labour) trade union and is clearly influenced by its anarcho-syndicalist conceptions.

Tania explained, "I came to the protest today to see what is going on. In the last week I've been in the other

assemblies that are going on in other squares around here. There are more things going on than in this square. There are a lot of assemblies, economic assemblies, political assemblies, etc.

“There are two different things going on in the city. On May 15 there was a big demonstration that began on the Internet and on Facebook. But then 40 people decided to stay after the demonstration. It began there when they decided to sleep here and then they built what you can see here.

“They decided they would be self-organised and ‘horizontal’, with no hierarchical movements and no politicians. And they decided they were going to protest about the situation and about the corruption in the political parties, about unemployment, about the economic situation in Spain that is getting worse every day”.

“What is happening now is that the movement is being decentralised and the people want to go into the neighbourhoods. I think they have decided to stay here, but now we are also going to move into the neighbourhoods to help resolve the problems there. For example there are a lot of families that are losing their homes, so we are building helping networks so that people won’t have to sleep in the streets”.

When asked about the attitudes of protesters to the bringing down of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) government, Tania replied, “There are many different ideas here. Some want to reform the system and others want to completely change the system. Some want to change the system from its roots to the top and they want to decide what should be done from the grass roots.

“I think the PSOE and the Popular Party [PP], the conservative party, are the same. They cannot decide things because the people who are deciding things are above them. For example the previous government, the PP, was doing all the banking speculation. Now the PSOE is carrying out the socialisation of the banking losses. The PSOE has taken the public’s money in order to save the banks.

“This is a crisis that we have not caused and now we are going to pay the debt by unemployment,

privatisations of public companies and inflation”.

She added, “I think the police assault in Barcelona was outrageous, because this is a nonviolent movement. The violent people are the bankers, the people that make the wars in the world. What the people did in Barcelona was resist because they didn’t want to go and the police had orders to ‘clean the square’, as they put it”.

When asked about the attitude of the protesters to the trade unions, Tania replied, “They hate the trade unions. The CCOO [Stalinist-oriented] and UGT [PSOE-dominated] have done nothing for the people. They get massive amounts of money from the government and support the political system. There was one case where a union even received money when workers lost their jobs. The unions have given no support to the protests”.



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