

[Leaflet distributed in Liège on a union demo on 26 Oct 2011.]

ArcelorMittal:

FIGHTING AGAINST CLOSURES?

INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE TO MAKE THE BOSS PAY!

Once again, ArcelorMittal has decided to “definitively” close the two hot phase blast furnaces in the steelworks in Liège. 581 jobs of the directly employed and close to 2000 of the indirectly employed will be lost. Once again, the unions, the town councillors, the MPs, the Region, the ministers are “astonished” and scandalised by this decision and act like there’s been a vile betrayal by a bad boss... “foreign”, what’s more !!!

It is “*a veritable social cataclysm*”, a “*genocide*”... There are no words strong enough to express the indignation that this long-awaited announcement arouses, even more than with the cold phase, which faces a similar future. After having played off Mittal against Arcelor to preserve the hot phase, they moan and organise symbolic and “citizenly” protests, and give some crumbs and “social housing” as consolation, promising planned redundancy schemes, redeployment, while demanding above all that the workers stay calm and “responsible”. This is not the way to fight effectively against the consequences of closures and redundancies.

Workers, comrades, all these people are your FAKE FRIENDS!

The boss is not going to change his mind!

Before even making steel, ArcelorMittal, as it loves to tell its investors, makes profits. In September, in front of some investors, Lakshmi Mittal, the CEO and main shareholder of ArcelorMittal, showed his colours. His group is going to increase its profits by \$2.2 billion between now and the end of 2012. \$1.2 billion has to come from improvements in productivity. For the other billion, there’s a simple solution, increase the production of steel where the costs of production are lower, that is to say in the blast furnaces on the coast.

The result: definite closure of blast furnaces in Liège, two others in Florange in Lorraine and another, Eisenhüttenstadt, in Germany. To replace them there are already the furnaces of Dunkirk which are going at full blast, feeding iron slabs to Liège and Florange. To benefit the company you shut down the less profitable sites and you run at full speed those where the profits are higher. Sometimes capitalism is simple...

This closure of sites a long way from the sea was already prepared for by the Gandois plan, 25 years ago, and by the Apollo plan concocted by Arcelor in 2003. The unions and the Walloon government supported Mittal, when he launched his takeover bid for Arcelor. The present fall in demand for steel is therefore used by ArcelorMittal to carry out an old plan of savings on the backs of the workers at the “less profitable sites”. Even during the stronger fall in demand in 2008-2009, the company continued to be profitable despite shutting down half its capacity in Europe. To adapt production to demand so as not to let the price of steel fall, that is the policy of the steelmakers.

You must, first of all and above all else, count on no one but yourselves, and organise yourselves, with your workmates but also with those from Charleroi who are not yet directly affected but who will be the next target in the long process of restructuring of the steel industry.

After having accepted successive sacrifices under the pretext of saving jobs, and believing the promises of the bosses, the politicians and the unions, all mixed up together, it's the end of the line! With your backs to the wall, there is no other solution than struggle, than going on strike, than stopping production in the sites which are still running, to extract as much money as possible. When they announced the closure of Volkswagen-Forest, in November 2006, it was by struggle and the fear which it inspired that the workers obtained millions in compensation and redundancy money.

Demanding that the state, or the regional authorities intervene to "nationalise" something completely "over-indebted", is certainly not going to help you. The capitalists and their state prefer to save the banks, not the steelworks which don't make the profits which they expect. What's needed is to hit hard, where you can do some real damage! You need to get out and about, to go and block the other factories in cooperation with the workers from there and then go, in force, to the headquarters in Luxembourg.

You need to go to your comrades in Gent (Sidmar) and Dunkirk because the struggle, like steel, has no borders.

But let's not think only about how steelworkers have problems as steelworkers, but about how workers who face their problems must go to other workers, above all in the Belgian context where all the nationalisms and regionalisms are there to divide the workers whether they are in the North or the South of the country!

You have to take control of your own struggle, without waiting for a hypothetical and illusory "union solution". What compromises can they offer faced with the final stage of closures?

We have to make them pay! Only struggle pays!

Mouvement Communiste/Kolektivně proti kapitálu

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Take a look at the website of Mouvement Communiste: www.mouvement-communiste.com