



REPORT ON BRAZIL

by CONLUTAS - Coordenação Nacional de Lutas

GM workers protest against temporary workers dismissals. The banner reads "No layoffs! Security of Employment Now! Workers shouldn't pay for the crisis! Make the rich pay!"



Brazil is experiencing the worst economic crisis in 80 years. The GNP decreased 0.8% in 2009 first quarter. The exporting sector is the most affected as Brazil is a main world provider of food (coffee, sugar, soy bean, orange juice, beef, chicken and pork) and minerals, mainly iron ore. The auto industry also decreased its production in 14,2% in the first five months of 2009 in relation to 2008. Unemployment is rising. The first wave of widespread dismissals, including major corporations, began at the end of 2008 / beginning of 2009. The state of Sao Paulo, the most industrialized one, lost more than one million industrial jobs. Now unemployment is increasing at slower pace. The next economic downturn will provoke another round of mass layoffs.

Brazil's president, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, elected in 2002, had been the main workers leader since the historical strikes against the dictatorship in 1978. Once elected Lula made business his priority. Since the crisis started, the government provided more than

R\$ 300 billions (US\$ 150 billions approximately) to banks and big corporations. On the other side nothing was done to stop dismissals and concessions. At the same time Lula promotes the illusion that the crisis will end soon. At last but not least, he is playing a shameful role leading the UN occupation troops in Haiti.

Workers resistance are in its first moments. At first there were difficult defensive struggles against massive dismissals and concessions. Then there were some important strikes for wage increase among oil workers, bus drivers and building workers with small victories. Few days ago a 57 days long strike in the most important university in Brazil, the Sao Paulo university, was over. The employees with students

association support challenged the police occupation, and got a wage increase of 6% plus some other benefits. The support for Lula among workers is still high as they expect Lula will prevent the crisis from hitting the working people deeply.

Conlutas is playing an important role in the resistance. The main National Unions Center - CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores) and Força Sindical - are benefiting from the national government policies and are applying for partnership with the bosses to overcome the crisis. They are open for concessions on labor rights and to campaign for public money for the companies. Conlutas has a different approach. Concessions do not lead to job preserving. Public resources should be applied in

education, health, social security, affordable housing programs. United struggles, nationally and internationally, can really make the difference to save jobs and keep workers rights. Since the crisis started Conlutas affiliated unions and members has been leading important struggles against big corporations like General Motors, Vale do Rio Doce (the biggest world iron ore company) and Embraer (the fourth largest air industry in the world); building and transport workers, and public employees as in Sao Paulo University.

Committed to unity in action, Conlutas participated in a joint National Day of Protests with CUT and Força Sindical last March 30th. The next Protests will be held in August 14th 2009.

The Formation of Conlutas

In 2003 Lula stood for a bill to reduce public employees pension rights. The CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores) did not support the public employees and divided the movement keeping private sector workers apart.

Conlutas is born as a coordination to fight back the Pension's Reform uniting public workers unions that went on strike for 40 days, and other unions and activists that supported the strike. Among the main unions that formed

Conlutas are the ANDES (University Professors National Union) and the Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos de São José dos Campos (Sao Jose dos Campos Metalworkers Union that represents the main GM plant in Brazil).



March 13th and 14th 2004: Conlutas is formed in a National Meeting in Luisiania-GO that gathers 1800 participants from 181 unions and associations

May 5th to 7th 2004 - First National Working Class Congress in Sumare-SP: 2729 elected delegates plus 235 observers and 268 guests from 529 unions and associations decide to turn Conlutas into a National Workers Center



July 3rd till 6th 2008 - Conlutas First Congress meets in Betim-MG: 2814 elected delegates from 305 unions and opposition union groups, 70 social movements associations and 108 students faculties and schools

2009 - Struggles in Brazil

Vale do Rio Doce - Protest against layoffs in Itabira-MG gathers support from the public



Women Commission leads a street protest in Sao Paulo-SP with 700 attendance

March 30th National Day of Protests - Conlutas in unity with 20 National Organizations against crisis effects. 7.000 march from the Industrialist's Federation and the Central Bank to downtown Sao Paulo



Congresso Estudantes with subtitles: 1350 elected students delegates launch the Students National Assembly



45 organizations launch the campaign for the nationalization of brazilian air industry EMBRAER



Workers Struggle is an International Struggle

Conlutas has a clear commitment to International Solidarity. It is not affiliated to any International Unions Centers due to their labor-capital partnership approach. Last July

7th and 8th 2008, together with the COB (Bolivian Union Center) and Batay Ouvrié from Haiti, it called a Latin American and Caribbean Workers Forum - ELAC. 400 union-

ists and fighters from Brazil and 150 from all over Latin America participated to form an independent alternative in Latin America committed to International Solidarity.



ELAC is a step towards a new International Framework for Workers Solidarity beyond borders



Conlutas in the campaign against Israel aggression in Gaza

Conlutas in solidarity with occupied Haiti demands UN troops withdrawal



Conlutas in the protest against the Coup D'Etat in Honduras