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12th Global Labour Conference
Reincarnation or Death of Neoliberalism
4 -6 October 2017

Jawaharlal Nahru University, New Delhi, India

Illegalized Migrants and Trade Unions: a Strike in Paris

Abstract: Illegalized Migrants and Trade Unions: a Strike in Paris

Migration and illegalized migration have been at the center of attention of media and politicians in Europe this last year. The war in Syria and ongoing worldwide economic crisis have accelerated migration fluxes to Europe. At the same time racist ideologies and right-winged populist forces are gaining momentum. The Schengen-boarders, once one of the core accomplishments of the EU, are partially suspended while outer boarders are being more heavily securitized. The EU-Turkey deal represents a further attempt of European leaders to externalize its boarders. Conservative and nationalist-authoritarian forces have put the topic of migration at the center of their demagogy. Therefore it is necessary to, on the one hand put illegalized migrants' agencies at the center of analysis and on the other hand to look at struggles that migrants have fought and what implication these struggles can have for the working class as a whole.

The organization and the struggles of illegalized immigrants, their range of possibilities within a specific regime of migration, are represented in a *sans papiers* movement in Paris the strikes, "L'acte I" and "L'acte II", of 2008-2010. This movement is of specific interest since it was organized by the main French trade union CGT. The strike of *sans papiers* in Paris brought together illegalized migrants from different sectors and of different origin. At the height of the movement 5000 *sans papiers* workers were on strike. This obviously led to contradictions within the trade union as well as within the group of *sans papiers* that were on strike.

I suggest conceptualizing the movement, using qualitative research interviews and literature, by distinguishing between three axis-of-analysis: the strategies and tactics used by the movements, the political alliances, and the dominant ideologies. By illustrating the interplay of the three levels with each other I will determine the dominant ideologies of the movement, specify the ways in which decisions were made, and summarize considerations made on specific modes of action. I highlight what this struggle meant for the trade union CGT and how the experience of this struggle, that took place six years ago, still has relevance today. Given the tense current political climate in France, just before the presidential elections, the trade union CGT has to position itself on the topic of migration as a whole. I will determine continuities and ruptures of the CGTs position on (illegalized) migration and what relevance the strike of 2008-2010 has for the trade union today.

The deliberate emphasis on *sans papiers* as performing subjects implicates *sans papiers'* agencies in the configuration of a certain regime of migration.