

Spanish state

Camp Barcelona: V for victory

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The movement has won its first victory against repression. The attempted eviction on Friday, May 27 of the camp at plaza Catalunya in Barcelona, the second largest so far in the Spanish state, met with a resounding failure. A week after the movement had politically defeated the prohibition of the Central Electoral Board on demonstrations during the election weekend of May 21- 22, early on Friday morning, the Catalan police tried to evict the camp at plaza Catalunya. Behind the intervention, a ridiculous and barely credible pretext of facilitating the cleaning of the square.

An overwhelming police presence closed access to the square, hemming some three hundred people inside, to allow the municipal cleaning teams to begin to dismantle the camp. More than a thousand people turned out in solidarity with the camp, managing to “reconquer” the square and forcing the withdrawal of the police. There is no doubt about the brutality shown by the police during the attempted eviction. Despite the lies of the Minister of Interior of the Catalan Government, Felip Puig, the images speak for themselves. So does the result: more than 100 wounded, one person very seriously.

Police provocation? Error of calculation? Whatever the case, the movement has achieved a major political victory. The image of a nervous Felip Puig responding to journalists at his appearance before the press was a clear sign of the political and policing fiasco of the Catalan Government. More than the formal “reconquest” of the square, the triumph in the face of this first repressive attempt has given even more strength and energy to the activists and has only increased the sympathy they enjoy from the majority of the population. After a loss of media centrality last week, once the municipal and regional elections were over, the police attack on the camp in Barcelona has again given an important visibility to the movement of “los indignados”.

More than 12,000 people, according to media figures, went to the plaza Catalunya on Friday evening. Before, at 5 pm, several thousand took part in a march against public health cuts, convened by the platform of “indignant,” health workers, departing from the monument to Columbus and culminating with a triumphal entry into the plaza Catalunya. Without a doubt, the assembly held at the end of the day was the biggest since the movement began. The most prominent slogans conveyed a very clear political message: “We won’t move from Plaza Catalunya!”, “Felip Puig resignation”, “Here begins the revolution!”. The concentrations in the camps in the rest of the Spanish state have been also more numerous over the past few days. Anti-repressive solidarity has given new impetus to the movement, after a week in which tiredness had accumulated.

It is impossible to know how long the camps and assemblies in the squares will last, but this is not a temporary or isolated movement. It is the tip of the iceberg of an accumulated social unrest that is beginning to become a mobilization. The camps and occupations of the squares should not be analyzed as ends in themselves. They act now simultaneously as symbolic reference points and base of operations, a lever to propel future mobilizations and a loudspeaker to amplify ongoing struggles. Throughout the week, several sectors in struggle have participated in the activities of our particular “Tahrir square” in Barcelona, including: collectives in favour of the right to decent housing and families under threat of eviction, workers from Telefónica in the fight of the announcement by the

company of 6,000 lay-offs and students and university workers in protest against cuts in higher education, whose mobilisation on Thursday May 26 mobilization was more than impressive taking into account that we are at the end of courses and on the eve of exams.

Almost two weeks after 15M and the beginning of the camps the movement of our small “May 2011” faces several challenges. The first, to continue territorializing, building the assemblies in the neighbourhoods and cities and encouraging popular self-organisation. The second, to increase efforts to seek ties with the working class, workplaces in struggle and combative trades unionism and thus keeping the pressure on major unions, baffled by a movement that they did not expect and which radically challenges their orientation towards social dialogue. The third, completing the momentum of the camps with a unifying date of powerful mobilization in the Spanish state as a whole and, as far as possible, at the international level. Hence the need to start working on June 19 as the date for global mobilization launched by the Barcelona camp.

Today has been decisive for breathing energy, raise new solidarities and redoubling the motives of indignation. It is important now to think strategically and collectively about the next step.

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