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Internationalism in Practice

11th September 2018

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Internationalism in Practice

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From the mines around the world to the corporate power centres of London

Low wages and appalling working conditions, environmental destruction, corporate greed- all these are components of the mining and extractive industries. We have seen the treatment of miners in this country and also the problem with extracting fossil fuels when we desperately need to deal with climate change. Fracking is currently one of the main battle fields. However, the worst of the mining industry is seen abroad, in the global south, as companies benefit from the colonial legacy. Mining is spread to even the remotest parts of the globe, completely destroying the environment and cultures of indigenous peoples.

It is not just the mines but it is also the processing stages that pose problems. Communities in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu have been fighting the expansion of Sterlite's copper smelter which is already causing toxic air and water pollution. However, the company has reacted to peaceful protests with extreme violence. Protests have been going on for months but the reaction of the company and the State has been extreme violence with many arrests. In May thirteen people were killed

by the police during a protest. On Wednesday 23 May, a day after the massacre, a large and noisy protest dominated by traditional Parai drummers was held at the India High Commission in London. Protesters called on the British government to launch an inquiry into the multiple legal, environmental and human rights violations by Vedanta Resources, the parent company of Sterlite, and consider de-listing the company from the London Stock Exchange.

Vedanta Resources is one of the worst examples of global resource and extraction companies with a history of human rights and environmental abuses. Their owner is Anglo-Indian and based in London. They have mining interests all over the world and everywhere they go there are problems and protest movements develop.

They came into the news a few years ago with their attempt to mine bauxite from the sacred mountain of the Dongria in Odisha state, eastern India. Thanks to a concerted campaign with international support, Vedanta backed down (www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/dongria). Recently, Zambian farmers have organised resistance against the pollution caused by copper mining. They are aiming to sue Vedanta and managed to win the right to do so after Vedanta tried to stop them in the courts in London.

All over the world resource industry workers and local communities are struggling against the companies that are providing the minerals for our way of life, eg mobile phones and all other electronic devices. The aim as always is to maximise profits at the expense of people and the environment. However, those who are directly battling these companies are not alone. It is possible to organise practical solidarity for these resistance movements. Companies like Vedanta often have headquarters in London and are registered on the London Stock exchange. The London Mining Network was set up to take advantage of this in order to support anti-mining movements around the world.

From the website of London Mining Network

London Mining Network works in support of communities around the world who are badly affected by mining – mining by companies based in, or financed from, London. Mining is one of the most polluting industries in the world. It is linked with conflict and human rights abuses. Most of the world's biggest mining companies, and many smaller mining companies, are listed on the London Stock Exchange, and on its Alternative Investment Market (AIM).

Since the protests against Vedanta and calls for the company's delisting, Vedanta has delisted itself. Whatever the implications of this it is vital that we continue to show solidarity to those who struggle around the world against the extraction industry as well as fighting in this country against fracking.

For more information on struggles against Vedanta see: www.foilvedanta.org

Article from Jackdaw 3