

Nearly 50 000 people said their NO to antisocial reforms in Prague

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Some 48 thousand people gathered on Wenceslas Square in Prague at 1p.m. on 21 May 2011. The demonstration was called by Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS) as a protest against the suggested form of governmental reforms that are unjust and antisocial. The motto of the demonstration was “Stop Insidious Reforms!” The participants were, besides CMKOS, Association of Independent Trade Unions, National Board of Handicapped Persons, ProAlt, and some further organizations of the civil society as well as individual citizens.

The event started symbolically at 5 minutes to 12 with a march from the TU House at Žižkov along the highway to Wenceslas Square. The largest group of protesters at the head were metal-workers from TU KOVO, numerous were representatives of the Czech-Moravian TU of schools, members of TU of the Health Service and Social care of the CR (TU HSSC CR), TU of State Bodies and Institutions and many others.

The facilitators were an actress and former MP Ms Tanja Fischerova and the vice-president of CMKOS Ms Radka Sokolova.

The president of CMKOS, Mr Jaroslav Zavadil informed in his opening speech about dangerous impacts of the pension reform as well as the other reforms and reminded that trade unions present their own, much fairer suggestions for solving the issue of a pension reform. He called on the Government to use commonsense.

Mr Bohumír Dufek, president of Association of Independent Unions (ASO) also criticised the reforms and demanded new elections.

The president of TU HSSC CR Ms Dagmar Žitníková stated that the reform of the healthcare would bring about deterioration of healthcare for those who would not be able to pay extra fees; the social reform would make social assistance inaccessible for a lot of people because it would be moved from local communities to distant Labour Offices.

The president of National Board of Handicapped Persons Mr Václav Krása expressed his concern that people who can not work because of their illness or handicap and therefore do not have much money, will have problems with obtaining quality healthcare after the reform has been adopted.

The demonstration was greeted by Mr Jozef Niemiec, deputy general secretary of ETUC, and Ms Daniela Žuffová, vice-president of Confederation of TUs of the Slovak Republic.

The representative of ProAlt, Ms. Tereza Stöcklerová stressed that it was important to keep together and she was speaking about further protest steps including a general strike.

Ms Eva Tichotová from Association of Labour and Solidarity said that the government is deriding people.

At the end of the demonstration, the president of KOVO, Mr. Josef Středula, read a joint statement of demonstration participants.

STATEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST INSIDIOUS
REFORMS IN PRAGUE ON 21 MAY 2011

We are standing again on Wenceslas Square where our nation has gathered many times in critical moments of the Czech history.

The government, through its irresponsible ruling, has lost professional and ethical trust in implementation of reforms for the benefit of citizens of the Czech Republic.

The corruption in our country has reached such a point that it is beginning to threaten the very principles of a legal state and democracy.

The government is unable to prevent fraud of the money from public budgets.

Reforms of the healthcare, of the tax, pension and social systems are badly thought out, half-baked, ideologically tinged, lacking any analyses of impact on the citizens. They are intended to make the healthcare, pensions and social services only serve the profit.

Nonsensical cuts in expenses do not help the national budget because the government had disposed of the income side before through hazardous decreases in taxes.

Therefore we:

- **Refuse** your pension theft – a reform that is useful only for private pension funds.
- **Refuse** that paying for so called super-standard would mean that a vast majority of citizens will be restricted to healthcare for the poor.
- **Refuse** the disdain of the government for public opinion and social dialogue.
- **Refuse** that the so called reforms only increase the debt of the country and make employees become “tax pack-animals” who carry the main burden of increased taxes.
- **Refuse** continuous cuts in rights of workers in the Labour Code.
- **Refuse** that the benefits of workers be cut and politicians enjoy extensive benefits paid from our taxes.

We refuse this government of budget irresponsibility.

We do not want to be third-category citizens either at home or in Europe; and we are ready to consistently defend our rights.

In Prague, 21st May 2011