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European Union

Anti-Capitalist Manifesto for a Different Europe

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The manifesto that we have just adopted was drawn up by the Left Bloc (BE, Portugal), Red Green Alliance (RGA, Denmark), Scottish Socialist Party (SSP, Scotland, UK), RESPECT-Unity List (England, Wales) Socialist Workers Party (SWP, UK), Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, France), The Left (LG/DL, Luxemburg), United and Alternative Left (EUiA, Catalonia, Spain) Alternative Space (EA, Spain) and the Coalition Radical Left (Greece). In addition, Synaspismos (Greece) and the United Left (Spain) attended the meeting as guests

Social and democratic, feminist and ecologist, peaceful and in solidarity

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/esfo4aa.jpg>]

February 15, 2003, was a historic date: tens of millions of people, all around the world, demonstrated to stop the war. Moreover, these unprecedented mobilisations show a strong political will to impose universal peace, justice, international solidarity and social equality on those in power.

That day a new Europe was born. A rank and file Europe that is confronting the European Union and the ruling classes whose instrument it is.

The world of labour has remobilised. In almost every country the working classes have come out for demonstrations and strikes - sectoral, multi-sectoral and general. After Italy, Spain, Greece and France, which led the way, countries like Germany and Austria have shown an exemplary militancy and shaken Europe's most powerful and monolithic trade-union bureaucracies. Agenda 2010 is running up against stubborn resistance; and Schröder, discredited, has had to give up the SPD presidency in order to save his party from defeats in future elections. The shock wave of the anti-war movement is still far from exhausted. Demonstrations in the streets, a year after Bush launched his war, have once again been very large, above all in Spain, Italy and Britain. They are continuing to have an impact on 'official policies'. Contrary to all expectations, Bush's friend Aznar was thrown out in parliamentary elections, thanks to a spectacular intervention by the people; the people took its revenge for Aznar's flagrant defiance of their massive opposition to the war and his contemptible official lies. The conclusion is clear: the policy of 'unlimited war' and neo liberal policies are unpopular and have been rejected.

Right-wing governments thrown out by popular vote are succeeded by centre-left governments that don't break with neo-liberal and imperialist policies. The social strength of the anti-war movements and European Social Forum should extend onto the political terrain, in elections, and in the formation of a broad, pluralist, anti-capitalist political movement.

The June 2004 European elections will be an opportunity to fight for demands and proposals that the European global justice movement has fought for unceasingly: against the EU's reactionary, undemocratic and anti-social constitution, against imperialist war and European militarism, for peace and general disarmament - starting in our own countries - against neo-liberal policies and for a social, anti-capitalist programme.

1. A decent life for all of us, in Europe and the rest of the world.

Social matters are the most important to the lives of millions of people. It is the priority: Each man and woman has the right to a stable, full time job, a decent wage, unemployment benefits, sick pay, disability benefits or pensions, a house to live in, education and professional training and quality health services. And to enjoy and ameliorate those rights we need to recover all that has been taken from us during the last twenty years. This implies for sure a radical improvement of women's position on all levels: social, political, legal and institutional. Moreover, environmental conditions are part of our well-being. It is impossible to separate economic policy from the necessary criteria of sustained development, urban and rural planning, mobility and transport systems, rational use of natural resources, agriculture and food security.

In their struggle to maximize profit, employers and governments pretend that all that is "impossible" and "unworkable". But since 1970, wealth created in the European Union (before enlargement) has doubled while population has not grown. It has been the ruling classes who have profited from the enormous leap forward of productivity (technical progress, longer and more intense work and restructuring of manufacturing systems). It will suffice to tackle this huge social inequality by distributing wealth to the working classes and breaking open and reorganising the public sector. We have to stop the growing privatisation of the biosphere, which subordinates our lives to capitalist profits.

If these conditions are fulfilled, then we can say: yes, our societies and economies can provide wealth for all of us.

2. Break away from the neoliberal system: People before profit!

The European Union has established an institutional framework through the Maastricht Treaty that imposes strict budget limitations. The European Central Bank has become the inflexible guardian of this orthodox neoliberal monetarism. That kind of policy leads to drastic cuts in social expenditure and makes any alternative economic policy impossible. By pushing the mass of the population into poverty and squeezing the budget of the public and social sectors, they are trying to make privatisation unavoidable. In this way capital finds lucrative new fields for investment. Its objective is not economic growth but re-establishing its rate of profit.

These economic policies and their institutional framework must be changed. We need to break the hard core of European neo-liberalism and suppress the Maastricht convergence criteria and the Stability Pact. Like the "global justice movement", we support the Tobin-Tax as a step to attack neoliberal capitalism and its international institutions, struggle against financial speculation and to favour a genuine social policy.

We struggle in our countries and on a European scale for social equality through full employment, expansion of the public sector, social investment, a decent guaranteed minimum wage.

3. A peaceful Europe, against the European Super-State!

The Lisbon Summit in March 2002 adopted as its goal to become the strongest and most productive economy of the world as the European Union's main objective! That can only happen if it strengthens its economic, monetary, technological, political, cultural, media and military capacities to confront the two other major world powers, the US and Japan. It means exploiting the countries in the periphery of the capitalist world system and the working classes that labour in the European Union.

For the first time, the ruling classes most identified with European construction have obtained some legitimacy from the European population by opposing the US ruling class, thanks to President Bush's illegal and wild policies.

However, we hold no illusions about what the European Union can do. Our position is:

- No to war! The European Union must renounce to the use of war as a way to intervene in international conflicts.
- No support for US policies of permanent war and preventive military interventions. We are against its "antiterrorist war", whose first victims are our civil rights and freedoms! No to NATO!
- No to the new European militarism! Withdrawal of European imperialist military forces, whether they are under an EU flag or those of its member states! No to "humanitarian" military operations! The Eurocorps and its special brigades must be dissolved!
- All weapons of mass destruction - nuclear, chemical or biological - must be destroyed!
- No to the creation and development of the European arms industry! End weapons exports! Close the existing military industries and reconvert them to civilian production!

4. Defend our democratic freedoms

The strategy of "unlimited war" has been a powerful lever for attacking democratic freedoms and narrowing the space in which the popular masses can act. By creating a permanent atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, the ruling classes seek to force a choice on us: "to guarantee your safety, we have to reduce your freedom". In the name of the struggle against terrorism, Bush has legalised state terrorism. And Sharon is right in step with him.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/359112.jpg>]

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/359092.jpg>]

As early as September 2001, the EU had used "the struggle against terrorism", not to attack terrorist groups that didn't exist at the time in Europe. In fact it took the opportunity to outlaw trade-union, social, feminist, anti-racist and political movements and their public, democratic activities, which it can now call "offences internationally committed by an individual or a group against one or more countries, their institutions or people, with the aim of intimidating them and seriously altering or destroying the political, social or economic structures of a country".

Since then the EU has been strengthening the panoply of repressive means at a European level: the European arrest warrant, Europol, faster and more complete information exchanges, closer co-operation with the CIA, repression of immigrants, creation of spaces where the rule of law no longer exists, etc. - even though rivalries among member states' state apparatuses are slowing down this operation.

Capitalism is in difficulties. From below it is discredited and is once more being openly and massively challenged. At the same time it is restricting or even repressing movements and mobilisations.

Defending and extending threatened democratic freedoms is once more becoming imperative.

5. Defend immigrants, refugees and the right of asylum! Against Fortress Europe, against the far-right!

Millions of workers of both sexes around the world are victims of capitalist globalisation or repression by the state. They survive in steadily worsening conditions. Some of them try to cross the fortified borders and get "illegally" inside the imperialist fortress. The European Union has built such a fortress with its 1985 Schengen Agreement.

However, the European employers have since requested and obtained a selective legal immigration policy. It is applied according only to their needs for labour. Citizenship rights are denied to immigrants without protest to exclude them from social benefits as workers and taxpayers. As a result of these policies the human situation of these immigrant workers is unbearable. At the same time there is ruthless competition between the poorest sector of the native working classes and the new defenceless immigrants without rights. The far right and Nazi parties (and sometime also traditional parties of both right and left) profit from this latent conflict so as to encourage racism, xenophobia and hate.

– We are in favour of the free movement of persons! No to the Schengen Agreements! Equal citizen and labour rights for all immigrant workers! For quality social infrastructure and public services for all!

– We are against all forms of xenophobia and racism, whatever their origin or pretext! The working class movement has to struggle so that immigrants, both male and female, do not suffer any discrimination in wage levels or rights at work. It should be not only a political and social priority but also a moral one for the trade union and social movements.

– We offer our solidarity to all those who have to demand asylum, who have to escape repression because their struggle for liberty, civil rights, freedom of conscience, democracy, their social or revolutionary convictions or simply a better life.

6. No to the antidemocratic Constitution of multinational Capital

The bourgeoisies are struggling to put an end to the inconsistencies of the EU state apparatus. This is the expressed will of the financial industrial oligarchy and the biggest imperialist states in Europe.

First, they need urgently a strong regime in the perspective of a European superpower. This apparatus is developing a semi- authoritarian democracy: the European executive (Council of Ministers, Commission, EC) is not elected on the European level and it dominates the Parliament, which is elected by universal franchise- , putting the parliament under its tutelage. This process undermines all democratic rules and institutions.

Second, the Constitution sets the principles of today's capitalism in stone: absolute priority to the market principle, protection of private ownership of the means of production and exchange, and even the current neo-liberal, monetarist policies. On the other hand, it excludes labour legislation, obligatory rules and norms, and inter professional (national) collective bargaining between trade unions and bosses from the European level. But, financial, monetary, commercial and economic policies are supported by a powerful centralized apparatus on the European level. This leads to ongoing competition between the working classes of the member states. It introduces an uninterrupted downward trend of all living and working conditions in all EU countries.

Third, it opens the way for and organises European militarism, an indispensable part of a European imperialism: the obligatory and systematic rise in military spending; organisation of a European armament industry; a continuing link with NATO while opening the gates for an autonomous European armed force; and integration in the “unlimited war on terrorism”.

Fourth, the reinforcement of the European executive bodies (European Commission, European Council, Inter-Governmental Conferences, EBC) worsens the democratic deficit. It is leading to more EU control over national state apparatuses, more control by the big member states of the smaller states, and the negation of “minor” peoples by the national states.

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The undemocratic nature of the Constitution corresponds perfectly with the method which has been used to create it: behind closed doors, a harsh selection of reliable people led by 'eminent statesmen', and tight control by the big states. One thing is certain: this constitution has nothing to do with the European peoples' will! For all these reasons, we are opposed to the EU constitution. It is illegitimate, undemocratic and profoundly anti-social! It cannot be reformed. It can only be thrown out! In order to attain this objective we support the organization of the referendums.

We struggle for a different society and a different Europe, which will be social and democratic, ecologist and feminist, peaceful and in solidarity with the South. It is up to the peoples and nations of Europe to decide how and under which social and institutional principles they want to live together. We believe that all power must be in the hands of the sovereign peoples.

We recognise the right of the nations without states to determine their future, and we are in solidarity with the left forces that struggle in that direction, whatever our own political analysis may be.

Since the electoral campaign coincides with the preparation behind closed doors of the "constituent" Inter-Governmental Conference, we will use this opportunity to denounce this pseudo-constitution and develop our alternatives.

7. Break with social-liberalism! Another Europe is possible!

Yes, but this will require an extraordinary mobilisation of all progressive forces. Governments are more fragile, but the EU has become, notwithstanding its repeated crises, a formidable imperialist force in today's world. It is a machine to destroy the social and democratic gains that the working classes have won in 150 years of battles.

This EU is in the first place the child of the bourgeoisie and its parties. But it could never have triumphed without the active collaboration of Blair, Schröder, Jospin, Felipe Gonzalez - that is to say European social democracy. They were in government for years. They dominated national governments and the EU leading bodies (Commission, European Council, even the ECB) at key moments. But instead of breaking with neo-liberalism they became social liberals themselves! Nothing suggests that have any intention of breaking with that policy.

We will not leave the neo-liberal, imperialist system in a gradual way. We need a radical political break and an alternative, anti-capitalist strategy and programme.

This struggle is in the hands of the other Europe, the Europe from below. This movement is growing and maturing through the anti-war demonstrations, social and ecological struggles, the citizens' initiatives, the women's mobilisations. It is progressing through the activists and the organisations: trade unions, peasant organisations, ecological groups, the movements of those 'without' (the jobless, homeless, undocumented, asylum seekers), anti-racist networks, academic and intellectual initiatives, Third World campaigns and NGOs.

The European Social Forum has created an extraordinary framework, democratic and unitary, a new movement of emancipation on a European scale. This social movement is already a force that counts for something. But it has to conquer the political field yet.

Under its pressure, the traditional trade union movements who for twenty years have fallen in line with the UE and its policies, have taken action again, but without developing, for the time being, a coherent strategy to reverse the tide and struggle for a strong social alternative.

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Yes, another Europe is possible, but it depends on the radical forces involved - : anti-capitalist and ecologist, anti-imperialist and anti-war, feminist and for citizenship, anti- racist and internationalist - whether they are ready to mobilise in the streets and at the ballot box, in struggles and elections. The alternative to capitalism is raising again its head: a socialist and democratic society, self-managed from below, without exploitation of labour or women's oppression, based on sustainable development and opposed to the "growth model" that threatens the planet.

Brussels, 29 April 2004

Signatures:

Left Bloc (BE, Portugal), Red Green Alliance (RGA, Denmark), Scottish Socialist Party (SSP, Scotland, UK), RESPECT-Unity List (England, Wales) Socialist Workers Party (SWP, UK), Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, France), The Left (LG/DL, Luxemburg), United and Alternative Left (EUiA, Catalonia, Spain) Alternative Space (EA, Spain), Coalition Radical Left (Greece).