

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1964>



Europe

Third European Anti-capitalist Conference, an encouraging step forward

- IV Online magazine - 2010 - IV431- December 2010 -

Publication date: Monday 13 December 2010

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Delegates from all over Europe, from Ireland to Poland, from Greece to Norway, met for the Third European Anti-capitalist Conference met in Paris on October 16 and 17 at the height of the demonstrations against the French pension reform.

Whereas the first two were initiated by the Nouveau parti anticapitaliste (NPA, France), this third conference was held at the joint initiative of the NPA and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP, Britain). It brought together 22 organisations from 16 countries [[Delegations from the following organisations participated in the conference : Bloco de Esquerda (Portugal), Gauche anticapitaliste (Switzerland), Izquierda anticapitalista (Spanish state), LCR-SAP (Belgium), POR (Spanish state), SEK (Greece), ISL (Germany), En Lucha (Spanish state), DSIP (Turkey), SWP (UK), Red Green Alliance (Denmark) Internationale Socialisten (Holland), People before profit (Ireland), SWP (Ireland), OKDE Spartakos (Greece), Polska Partia Pracy (Poland), Sinistra critica (Italy), Mouvement pour le socialisme (Switzerland), SolidaritéS (Switzerland), Red Party (Norway), Socialistiska Partiet (Sweden), NPA (France).

The statement adopted by the conference can be read below and highlighted primarily the structural rather than temporary nature of the current crisis. Far from generating Keynesian solutions, this crisis has given rise to austerity plans which tend to institutionalise neoliberalism, to write it into the genetic code of societies. Thus, in Germany for example, austerity measures are redefining the very notion of the “vital minimum” with a ceiling for the household basket, of 180 euros per month. In France, Spain, Greece, Ireland, it is the pension systems and labour codes which are being targeted. And in Italy, it is the national labour contract “that is the fixing at the national level of the minimum price of the sale of labour power” which is challenged. These policies, which are being implemented in a societal and climatic crisis, are accompanied by authoritarian measures, the development of racism and a return to “values” which tends to legitimate the return to the house of hundreds of thousands of women. In addition, as in Germany, Switzerland or Poland, there is a new offensive favouring the construction of nuclear power stations which is only beginning.

The fact that this meeting took place at the heart of the movement against pension reform in France underlined the necessity of coordinating struggles at the European level, and more modestly, that of anti-capitalists coordinating their own intervention. It is this which the participants wanted to bear witness to by interrupting their work to participate in the Parisian demonstration. A Polish comrade, one from the Spanish state and one from Greece were thus able to address the demonstrators under the auspices of the NPA. This conference also preceded the mobilisations being prepared in various European countries, which in the two following months would embody popular resistance to austerity in Britain, Ireland and Portugal, and against nuclear energy in Germany.

There were three points on the conference agenda: the crisis, its political consequences and the resistance of the workers; the responses to the crisis advanced by anti-capitalists; our common interventions and perspectives and their coordination.

The first point introduced by Alex Callinicos of the SWP allowed a rich exchange. Without going over the different mechanisms at work in the development of the crisis, a broad agreement emerged on stressing its deep and durable character, not as a simple cyclical episode but a profound turning point embodied in the austerity policies engaged upon by all the European states. It amounts to a challenge to social gains which knows no other limit than the resistance of the workers and popular classes. It generates a crisis of neoliberal ideology: far from bringing democracy and progress, the market economy is identified with social regression which accompanies the rise of reactionary ideas born by a new far right.

The interventions illustrated the great diversity of workers' resistance. And also the paradoxical political consequences of the crisis, as in the Spanish state, where the collapse of the left has left the field free to the right despite the success of the general strike. In any case, for anti-capitalists, the question is posed of acting in unity through a united front policy while defending anti-capitalist perspectives, in acting so that the workers lead their struggles, at the rank and file level, without handing them over to the bureaucracies, by making democracy live inside the movements. Several comrades stressed the importance of the movement in France which represents a point of hope beyond activist layers.

The second point introduced by Yvan Lemaitre of the NPA on the basis of the document "Our responses to the crisis" submitted for discussion at the NPA congress showed a broad agreement on the demand that workers reject bearing the costs of the crisis, the need to grasp the question collectively at the European level to better integrate this dimension in our policy. Even if the national arena remains the framework of the class struggle, the European dimension remains, as shown on September 29 in Brussels. The discussion on the question of the slogan concerning withdrawal from the euro is an illustration of it. This discussion is very present in the Greek workers' movement where the feeling that Greece has been subject to the diktat of the European Union and the IMF is summed up in this slogan, to such an extent that the movement has not been able to oppose the attacks of the PASOK government. Withdrawal from the euro appears as a "possible" response. It is an illusion, the only way out of the crisis is that of the intervention of the workers to break with the bourgeois institutions, nationalise the banks by creating a single credit organisation and then to break with capitalist Europe but acting in the sense of another Europe, that of the workers and the peoples. The discussion is not closed, it has only begun.

The need to deepen this discussion on anti-capitalist perspectives was one of the main conclusions of this conference, introduced and developed by Vanina Giudicelli of the NPA. It is about seizing each opportunity to act together, demonstrate the existence of a European anti-capitalist current, draw up common material, favour interventions in meetings, show internationalist solidarity with struggles, and so on. A common date was agreed, in spring 2011, to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the Paris Commune.

For all the participants, this third conference marks a stage, undoubtedly a step forward in the quality of relations and discussions, despite the lack of advance preparation. The holding of two conferences per year was decided with the concern of giving us the means of better preparing them. The question of a more structured coordination was discussed, it did not receive unanimous support from the participants and we preferred the idea of a flexible coordination. A final declaration was discussed, amended, formulating the key points of the approach which unites us.

Anti-capitalist Conference - Paris October 16th and 17th - Final statement

Capitalist Europe, the Europe ruled by the European Central Bank, the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties, the Europe of "free and fair competition", the tool of the offensive of the multinational corporations and their states against workers and peoples, is now in crisis.

All the European governments have widely used public subsidies to save financial system and banks after the subprime crisis in 2007 and 2008. These policies have increased budgetary deficits. All the European governments have imposed their will on Greece and now they use the deficit to impose stringency and austerity to ordinary people. The profits of the banks are higher than ever. But it's up to workers to pay the bill! The reason for the deficits is very well known and obvious: the scale of subsidies given by states to the bosses and the rich. On one hand they distribute gifts to them; on the other hand, they exempt them from taxes. And in order to raise, finance they borrow money from these people ! So the finances of states are being privatised. The balance sheet is clear: the forecast

economic recovery hasn't happened and everybody can hear the new cracks opening up in their system. Everywhere unemployment is increasing, except partly in Germany. Wages are stagnating or decreasing. Public services are being dismantled and sold off cheaply to private sector. On a worldwide scale, a currency war is raging. A new financial crisis is threatening.

The governments are trying to divert the anger emerging from popular layers of society; they are encouraging xenophobia and racism, linked with laws who refuse to recognise immigrants as citizens at all. In order to divide workers, they refer to immigration - or the Roma in France – as scapegoats. So they pave the way for a new far right populism that is now rising up everywhere. Once more, women are mainly paying for this crisis, the effects of which come on the basis of profound gender inequalities. The threat of unemployment and increased pressure towards “going back to being a housewife”. The decay of public services and the lack of facilities force millions of women into domestic slavery.

The political bankruptcy of the ruling classes and their states is ruining the conditions of living of an endlessly increasing section of the people. It also threatens previously won democratic rights. We need urgently to put an end to this dangerous and destructive approach; unite the working class and its forces; reverse the balance of power; refuse be divided by old fashioned borders. Already the austerity policies being pursued right across Europe have provoked widespread resistance. This has been highest in Greece – above all with the quasi-insurrectionary general strike of 5 May – but in recent months we have seen massive protests in France, the Spanish state, and other countries, and further mass action is in prospect. The first task of the anti-capitalist left must be to build these struggles on as broad and a militant basis as possible, and to seek to ensure that they are not undermined by the efforts of the trade-union bureaucracy and social-democratic politicians to limit and control them. It's also important to support the calls for the unity of the trade union movement, to help them come into being on a europe-wide level, like on 29 September in Brussels,

The same policies are hitting us; we need to fight them altogether. All together we have to coordinate at the European level in order to popularize emergency measures – social, democratic and ecological measures, which are mandatory if we don't want to pay for their crisis.

We refuse to pay for their crisis

To get rid of the plague of unemployment and casual work, it is necessary to share work among all workers, to give everyone a job and wages and to impose massive recruitments in public services. Against poverty and inequality, it is necessary to increase all wages and to guarantee everyone the right to enjoy a decent retirement pension. Rights to enjoy housing, health care and education need to be protected by stopping the sabotage of public services. They need to be reinforced, under the control of people. Unity of oppressed and exploited people doesn't fit with borders and discriminations. All men and women living and working in the territories of Europe are full citizens. Identity papers for everyone! While states are cynically imposing sacrifices to people, they are squandering billions of euros in military expenses and on the war in Afghanistan for the exclusive purpose of defending their imperialist interests. Stop that waste! Stop that dirty war! Stop NATO and military expenses!

The crisis also shows clearly the predatory character of the profit system, by recklessly exploiting natural resources, annihilating peasant agriculture, destroying ecosystems, causing global warming. As never before, justice and self-management, emancipatory projects and a socialist horizon are becoming consubstantial with the environmental struggle.

To fulfill fundamental human needs, it's necessary to abolish the illegitimate public debt. This means getting to an end with the voluntary submission of governments to the banks and hedge funds. These must be put out of harm's way by being expropriated in order to socialize credit.

Conquering democracy, rights and the means to decide and control

This break with capitalism requires a growing and sustained mobilisation by millions of people, which raises the consciousness of the power of the working class movement and opens up the conquest of democracy, allowing workers and the people to develop everything needed directly to intervene in the management of society, of workplaces, of public services and local communities.

This break needs a democratic upheaval, a new organization of the people to assure their control of every area of economic social life. This upheaval means a break with the institutions devoted to the defence of the privileged social classes. It also requires - through social and political mobilizations - a government born from the mobilizations, under their control and able to impose respect for workers' rights. To make this easier we need to defend the political participation of workers and the demand for unity in the struggles of those forces claiming to be of the working class and of the left against the right and neoliberal policies.

Breaking with a Europe ruled by finance, Building a workers' and peoples' Europe

We want to take a step further on the road of coordinating struggles at a European level. We want to work together and formulate demands and perspectives, and to implement them. We want to open the road to the Europe for the workers and the people we are fighting for, right now.

Our purpose is to prepare the future. Wealth and the means to produce wealth already exist. Unemployment, precarity, poverty and that subsequent trail of social pains and violence are nothing but the consequences of an unfair social organization. This system of exploitation is based on private ownership of the main means of production. The crisis shows every day how absurd it is.

The future belongs to socialism, to social ownership of all the main means of production, whose management already depends on the cooperation of billions of men and women at international scale.

Belgium : LCR/SAP

Britain: Socialist Resistance, Socialist Workers' Party

Denmark : Red/Green Alliance

France : Nouveau parti anti-capitaliste

Germany : ISL, RSB

Greece : OKDE Spartakos, SEK

Ireland : People before profit, SWP

Italy : Sinistra critica

Netherlands : Internationale Socialisten

Third European Anti-capitalist Conference, an encouraging step forward

Norway : The Red Party

Poland : Polska Partia Pracy

Portugal : Bloco de Esquerda

Spanish state : En Lucha, Izquierda anticapitalista, POR

Switzerland : Gauche anticapitaliste, Mouvement pour le socialisme,
Solidarités

Sweden : Socialist partiet

Turkey : DSIP