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European conference of the anti-capitalist left

A conference full of hope

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On the 31st May and 1st June a Paris conference called by the LCR on “May 68- May 2008” brought together the European anticapitalist left.

They all came and were all there from the north and the south of Europe. There were about a hundred representatives of about thirty organisations from sixteen countries present. Among them were the principal organisations of the revolutionary left in Europe which represent thousands of activists and sympathisers. Also present was an observer from the ISO ((International Socialist Organization) in the United States. Among them were the main organisations of the revolutionary left in Europe representing thousands of activists and sympathisers.

This international conference of the radical, anti-capitalist and revolutionary European left was undoubtedly a big success. For the first time since May 68 nearly all the anti-capitalist left was brought together in St-Denis (in the Seine St Denis department to the north of Paris). It was remarkable that this first meeting took place. The fact that it decided to continue and meet for a second conference in 2009 shows that something new is happening for Europe's radical left.

This success is first of all connected with both the support for and the curiosity about the LCR's initiative, building a new anti-capitalist party. But there is something else. A change in the historic period has been unsettling the workers' movement and organisations for several years, a process which is perhaps coming to maturity in a number of countries. The combination, in the framework of capitalist globalisation, of the current financial, banking and food crises of capitalism, of the redoubling of attacks against social and democratic rights, and the social-liberal evolution of the traditional left opens a space for the radical left.

These questions were dealt with in a first discussion introduced by François Sabado, a member of the LCR leadership. He indicated a series of points of convergence on the nature of the capitalist offensive, on the evolution of the social-democratic and communist parties and on the dynamic of the class struggle. This debate also confirmed the points of agreement about the principal anti-capitalist measures in the face of neo-liberal capitalism and the need for a clear independence from social democracy.

All the organisations present reaffirmed the necessity of rejecting the politics of parliamentary or governmental coalitions with the social liberalism of social democracy or the centre left. These main reference points for rebuilding a new workers' movement and an anti-capitalist alternative don't exhaust all the indispensable debates for rebuilding a socialist project, debates which we must have on the different experiences in Europe, questions such as the formulation of an European anti-capitalist programme, the war, an ecosocialist response to the ecological crisis and of course about the content and forms of socialism in the 21st century.

So we have to work and debate. The next conference in 2009 will be focused on the struggle against the war, NATO and military politics in Europe .

There was something else positive about this conference. It is not only a question of discussing but also of acting. There were three discussions after the main discussion. The first, which was introduced by LCR leadership member Yvan Lemaitre, about the war, in which considering the warmongering policies of the ruling classes and the role of Nato, the conference participants decided to organise a large international demonstration in Strasbourg and Kehl next spring on the 60th anniversary of Nato.

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For the first time a conference of this type looked at the question of global warming. It was introduced by Laurent Menghini. This second debate showed that all the anti capitalist organisations are developing an ecological dimension.

There was a third debate, introduced by Emmanuel Siegelman, on the importance of the struggle against racism and xenophobia. Following the example of the Lega Nord in Italy, which is waging a real campaign against foreigners, the attacks against immigrants are a central element of the attack of reactionary governments against social and democratic rights. Anticapitalists must make this a central axis of their activity in Europe .

After a short summary of the proceedings by Galia Trépère for the LCR, all the participants have decided to have a joint intervention at the next social forum in Malmo in Sweden, and especially to consider common activities at the time of the next European elections in 2009. What is at stake at a time when the far right, the socialist and communist parties all have European structures is to begin to build a European anti capitalist pole of attraction. This is one of the most difficult questions for each organisation has a different history, there are specific relationships of forces in each country. Some organisations have already responded positively. Others are going to discuss it, and some, without taking part in a European campaign, are open to common initiatives.

In short – the new anti-capitalist party is getting things moving in Europe !

The organisations represented were:

Austria : SOAL

Belgium: LCR-SAP

Britain : Respect, Socialist Resistance, Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party

Denmark : Red Green Alliance

France : LCR

Germany : Anticapitalist Left, BASG, Interventionist Left, ISL, Marx21, RSB,

Greece : Alternative Ecologists, AKOA, ARAN, ARAS, DEA, KOE, Kokkino, NAR (New Left Current), OKDE-Spartakos, SEK, Syriza, Synaspismos

Italy : Sinistra Critica

Netherlands : SAP

Norway : Socialist Unity

Poland : Polish Labour Party

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Portugal : Left Bloc

Spanish state : Espacio Alternativo

Sweden : Socialist Party

Switzerland : Gauche anticapitaliste, Mouvement pour le socialisme, Solidarités,

Turkey : ODP

United States : ISO