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Europe

Anti-capitalist left meets

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The third Conference of the European Anti Capitalist Left took place in Brussels, Belgium on December 12-13, 2001.

The participants in the conference were: the Red Green Alliance (RGA, Denmark), the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), the Socialist Alliance (SA, England), the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party (Britain), the Socialist Party (SP, Netherlands), La Gauche ("The Left", Luxembourg), the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR, Revolutionary Communist League, France), the Left Bloc (BdE, Portugal), Espacio Alternativo ("Left Space", Spain), Rifondazione Comunista ("Party of Communist Refoundation", Italy), Solidarité-S (Switzerland, Geneva), the A-DP ("Party of Solidarity and Liberty", Turkey), with Plataforma de Izquierda ("Left Platform", Spain) attending as observer.

The Conference had on its agenda: the international political situation, the movement against the war and capitalist globalisation, the threats against democratic rights in the EU, solidarity with the peoples of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the drawing up of a political statement and preparation for the second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil (January 2002).

The meeting decided to organise its fourth Conference in Madrid in June 2002 during Spain's presidency of the European Union and issued the following statement:

1. For the third time in ten years, imperialism is at war. After the unfinished war (for oil) against Iraq and the "humanitarian" intervention in the Balkans, the United States is bombarding Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries on earth, pretending in doing so to "eradicate terrorism worldwide".

"Self-defence", "humanitarianism", "western civilisation", "the democratic model" or "crusade": all are used as excuses. They cannot hide their basic objective: to restore a strong authority on a region with abounding raw materials, wealth and opportunities for trade and investment. People are assassinated, whole populations terrorized, governments and movements subdued or eliminated without restraint.

We unambiguously condemn the September 11 attacks as an act of mass terror against the civilian population. The project of reactionary Islamic organizations like Al-Qaida is to establish a theocratic, totalitarian and oppressive society. They have used terrorist means to contest the control of foreign multinationals over the immense richness of the region. But they don't struggle for the liberation and welfare of their people. This condemnation must be accompanied by a denunciation of all racist and Islamophobic campaigns.

This new imperialist war is the direct result of the advent of global capitalism, with its deepening and shattering contradictions.

This brutal war will not lead to a lasting peace. On the contrary - from Afghanistan, again under the control of the warlords, to Palestine, where Israel's State terrorism has its hands free - this war can only lead to new wars. It is up to the Afghan people to decide its own destiny.

2. The European Union, which is itself a motor of globalisation, is in full complicity with the US government. After some initial hesitations, it is participating in the war with its own objectives as a secondary imperialist power: to appear close to the US, the only superpower in charge of the global "new" world order; to hold on its position inside the triad (US, Japan, Europe); to enlarge its zone of influence, supporting its multinationals in the conquest of new

areas for trade and investment; to get its share of the final war-booty.

In this battle, the EU attempts to develop a more "humanitarian" and "peaceful" profile, and to take its own political-diplomatic initiatives. It tries to build on the unpopularity of the US and its war adventurism that threatens to extend the theatre of war to Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Lebanon and even Palestine and across the Ocean, to Colombia.... And on the fears of "wild" immigration from Eastern Europe. Finally, the EU tries to profit from the general feeling of insecurity to build popular support for its new "euro-militarist" policy. Without this, the EU will never manage to impose the "necessary sacrifices" upon the working class to pay for the "armed arm" of its dreams.

We oppose NATO as well as any European army. We are also against the rising militarism in the member-States.

3. The terrorist attack of September 11 and the imperialist war have given a big impetus to the state building policies of the EU. In spite of all its inner contradictions, there is a real danger that the EU will develop a supranational tool for reinforced cooperation in the service of the European bourgeoisies and the multinational companies.

First of all, cohesion between the big three member states of the EU is advancing. Germany has managed to break its biggest political taboo. For the first time since 1945 its army has been sent to fight on a foreign battlefield. It helps Germany to collaborate with France and Britain, without inhibitions, to build the European Rapid Deployment Force. With his renewed prestige as a "war leader", Blair is encouraged openly by foreign and British big capital to take Britain into the Monetary Union (euro, ECB etc.). If the launching of the euro in the European Continent is successful next January, the EU will reach a new stage.

At the same time, old obstacles are now being overcome: police coordination between the member States (Europol) with enlarged powers; creation of a common "border police"; a European judicial system (public prosecutor's office, "search and arrest warrant", harmonisation of penalties).

Here comes the Europe of repression! Never was the lie of a social Europe so flagrant!

4. Taking advantage of the war, the EU has launched the biggest attack on democratic rights and liberties since the Second World War.

Under the pretext of the terrorist threat, it aims at preventing any form of radical action by the popular and working classes, any social and political struggle to change the economic, social political structures of society, even if it is supported by a majority of the population! Indeed, "terrorist offences" will be all those "...intentionally 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, economic, or social structures of those countries.". And one becomes a "terrorist group" being "... more than two persons, acting in concert to commit the terrorist offences..." - i.e. any political party, trade union section, antiracist association, feminist group - and everyone of its members can be jailed from 2 to 20 years! The purpose is to discourage people from the onset to fight against the evils of this system, and to outlaw the organisations that defend the fundamental right of self-determination and contest the capitalist order. This "state of emergency" looms upon the labour and social movements and their struggles. A radical rightwing government will find in these laws a complete tool kit for repression that a left government might not dare to use.

Once more, war has created a splitting line: once more, social democracy (supported by the Greens in some countries) has done the dirty work, especially in the key countries of the EU: Blair, Schröder, Jospin!

5. The ruling classes, the financial-industrial capitalists understand clearly that their full scale offensive will meet with

opposition and resistance.

One of the objectives of this global state of war is to stifle the movement against capitalist globalisation, to destroy its offensive spirit and prevent its impact on the broader labour and social movement. But it didn't succeed in stopping the mobilisations: more than 100,000 workers, trade unionists and youth contested the EU Summit in Brussels.

The second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre will offer a mass platform for deepening the critique of capitalism and for launching on a world scale a new wave of struggles and mobilizations.

Without abandoning its own aims and organizational forms, the movement against globalization represents an important lever in support of the international anti war movement, as imperialism, headed by the American government, tries to impose a state of emergency worldwide.

In the tread of a recession that seems exceptionally severe, the capitalist classes have reinforced their anti social offensive since September, with massive lay-offs, attacks against the welfare system, new privatisations of the public services, more flexibility and stress on the work floor. It is without doubt a "second" war - social and economic - against the working class and its organisations. We want to contribute to build a powerful and united riposte in order to transform popular anger and discontent into a conscious struggle against the bosses and capitalism itself.

As part of the anti capitalist Left in Europe, we draw on this renewed capitalist offensive the conviction that capitalism is a catastrophe provoking wars, insecurity, egoism, misery and barbarism. If peace, security, solidarity, equality and happiness are to be won, we must prevent the harmful policies of Big Capital.

There is no other alternative than a socialist and democratic society, based on sustainable development, without exploitation of labour and oppression of women, a socialism from below, based on self-management!