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Third European Anti-capitalist Conference, an encouraging step forward

Sunday 19 December 2010, by [LEMAITRE Yvan](#) (Date first published: 18 October 2010).

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.

Yvan Lemaitre

See the statement: [Anti-capitalist Conference - Paris October 16th and 17th - Final statement](#)

P.S.

* Translation International Viewpoint.