

Europe: Statement by Anti-capitalist Left conference

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This statement was adopted by the anti-capitalist left organisations meeting together in London on the 11/12th of June 2011 on the call of the SWP (Britain) and the NPA (France) as a follow-up to the previous conferences held in Paris in June 2008 (see other documents posted in this section of ESSF website).

What prevented the 'Great Recession' of 2008-9 developing into a slump as deep as that of the 1930s is the willingness of the ruling classes of the advanced capitalist states substantially to increase public spending and borrowing: in 2009 budget deficits grew by five percent of national income in the advanced economies. But they have rejected calls to break with the neoliberal policies that helped to precipitate the crisis. Instead they have defined the increased government borrowing caused by the crisis as a problem that requires harsh austerity measures representing a radicalization of neoliberalism and threatening the survival of the welfare state. In Europe these policies are now being forced through by the bourgeois right, which is now in government almost everywhere.

But the crisis continues to pose an acute political danger to the ruling classes because of the intensification of the class struggle it can provoke. This danger has been realized in the Arab world with the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia. Here material privations intensified by the crisis - mass youth unemployment, rising food prices, etc - have fused with the accumulated hatreds of corrupt, brutal, and misogynistic regimes backed by the US and the EU. The result has been astonishing popular explosions whose future is uncertain but that have put revolution back on the political agenda.

But although the Arab revolutions are the most spectacular cases, there has been a more general upsurge in resistance. 2010 saw the struggle over pensions in France, general strikes in Portugal and Spain, multiple general strikes in Greece, student movements in Britain, France, and Italy, and the anti-precarity movement in Portugal. The 15th May movement in the Spanish state, beginning with a call for 'real democracy' and refusal to be 'commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers', has struck a chord with tens of thousands of mainly young people who have rushed to form their own 'Tahrir squares' all over the country, engaging in self-organized and increasingly self-confident civil disobedience, attracting a good deal of sympathy and with the prospect of spreading to other countries. A similar movement has developed in Greece with a dynamic that combines the squares and the strikes.

The recent movement to defend collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin shows that the austerity drive has now reached the United States, thanks especially to the victories won by the Republicans with the support of the Tea Party movement in the mid-term elections last November. But it also

shows the persisting combativity of the American working class. The workers' movement in the advanced economies has been weakened by the neoliberal offensive of the past generation, but the latest attacks risk stimulating a revival of militancy.

This big offensive can only be resisted through the cooperation of the anticapitalist left with a trade union movement that is combative, fully democratic, and based on the strong participation of the rank and file. This requires a break with the policies of class collaboration that too often dominate the trade unions, and which are rooted in the social pressures on trade-union officials both to express and contain workers' struggles. The growth of the influence of the anticapitalist left in the unions, as well as the greater confidence and self-organization of rank-and-file workers, are the most powerful forces in achieving such a break.

More concretely, we must:

- defend the democratic and social rights of the workers, the popular classes, and the youth against austerity, to be in all circumstances their spokesperson, to pursue in particular within the trade-union organizations a policy independent of the bosses, as well as of the state and of the government, whatever it might be.
- While starting from unconditional opposition to the parties of the bourgeois right, we pursue an unrelenting political critique of the so-called Socialist, Labour, and Social Democratic Parties for their capitulation to neoliberalism;
- defend in mobilizations as well as on the electoral terrain, as in parliament, an anticapitalist alternative to offer a perspective of rupture with capitalist society, rupture that can only be achieved by a movement of the whole of the population challenging the absolute power that the capitalist oligarchy exercises over society and posing the question of a democratic government of the workers and the people.
- persistently and creatively use the united front tactic in order to build the unity of the working class for the struggle and cooperate in a critical way with all those political forces that are against neoliberal policy and with the movements/trade unions who resist neoliberal policy.

This approach is likely to be most effective when it is based on active involvement in building resistance to austerity. The very severity of the crisis means that this resistance will confront ideological questions: above all, what is the alternative to austerity? The Western ruling classes have rejected Keynesianism and social democracy has refused to take it up. The anticapitalist left must oppose cuts in public services and the privatization of public services and campaign for an audit of the debt. But it should also be willing to put forward an alternative programme that begins to break with the logic of profit - for example, the nationalization of the banks, energy, rail, and the main service industries under democratic workers' control, progressive taxation of income and wealth, cancelling the debt that has been created by financial speculation, investment in 'climate jobs' that would simultaneously reduce CO₂ emissions and unemployment. We support the people of Iceland in their determination to refuse to pay the debt of bankrupt banks.

Anti-capitalist politics must continue to go together with anti-imperialism. American imperialism, already weakened by the Iraq debacle, has been further undermined by the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia. But the United Nations Security Council resolution on Libya has given the green light to Western military intervention aimed at rebuilding the imperialist-dominated system of states in the Middle East. The radical and revolutionary left must combine support for the struggle against the Gaddafi regime with opposition to the continuing military intervention in Libya by the US, France, Britain, and NATO. It is also necessary to continue campaigning against the occupations in

Afghanistan and Iraq.

One of the many negative consequences of the 'war on terrorism' is the impetus it has given to the development on racism and xenophobia in Europe and the US. Official attacks on multiculturalism by the likes of Merkel, Sarkozy, and Cameron lend respectability to the attempts by the far right - whether it is Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Marine Le Pen in France, or the English Defence League and its allies in Britain - to make anti-Muslim racism the cutting edge of their attempts to build up a popular base. Elsewhere in Europe it is the Roma who are the main target of the racist offensive. Building broad opposition to racism and Islamophobia and countering the attempts of fascist organisations to build themselves electorally and on the streets are among our most important tasks.

This means resuming the offensive on the social and political fronts, putting to work a politics of solidarity of the exploited classes against the dominant classes, who seek to divide the better to impose their policies. The surrenders and retreats create a climate of demoralization that opens the way to the reactionary ideological offensive. To resume the offensive on the social terrain means also to build a new socialist class consciousness.

It is clear that the situation places many demands on the radical and revolutionary left. We have therefore to build our own organisations to increase our capability to meet these demands - to win new militants to our ranks and to deepen our roots in working-class communities. We can also strengthen ourselves through cooperating together more. The anti-capitalist left has to match the international organisation of capitalism. Our strength is limited, but it is greater when combined. Through meeting and discussing together we can arrive at common initiatives and actions and, we hope, to define the political basis of a European anticapitalist regroupment.

In this spirit, we support and, where possible, will intervene together in the following initiatives :

- July 16 : mobilization of the ENOUGH campaign against the IMF in Dublin
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- October 1st : European conference against Austerity and Privatisation in London
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- October 15th : call from indignatos movement for action against austerity throughout Europe
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- November 1st : mobilization against the G20 summit in France

Belgium : Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR/SAP)

Croatia : Radnicka Borba

Denmark : Red-Green Alliance

France : Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA)

Great Britain : Counterfire - Socialist Party - Socialist Resistance - Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

Greece : Anticapitalist Political Group (APO) - Sosialistiko Ergatiko Komma (SEK)

Ireland : People Before Profit - Socialist Party - Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

Netherlands : Internationale Socialisten - Socialist Alternatieve Politics

Poland : Polish Labour Party (PPP)

Portugal : Bloco de Esquerda

Scotland : Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)

Spanish state : En Lucha - Izquierda Anticapitalista - Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR)

Sweden : Socialistisk Partiet
