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Europe

European Conference of the Anti-capitalist Left

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Description:

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At the beginning of December, preparing for the Nice counter-summit the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) acted as host to the second European conference of the anti-capitalist left in Paris. Around forty representatives of left parties and united left formations from eight countries attended. Groups from three other states sent apologies. The following text was released as a press statement at the end of the conference:

Ten years after the Maastricht Treaty the EU is preparing at the meeting in Nice, under the French presidency for a new stage: a European 'superpower'.

Over these ten years the EU has shown the extent to which it is an anti-social and anti-democratic construction, a war machine against the working and popular classes of Europe and the world.

The EU desperately continues to lack popular support and political legitimacy. The Danish 'no' is the latest example of this. The recent European wide struggles against the neo-liberal policy of the EU and the growing resistance against the impact of capitalist globalisation, embodied by the IMF and the World Bank. The responsibility of this reactionary offensive lies with the national governments of the member states. The Social-Democratic parties, supported by some Communist parties and Greens in government (France, Germany, Italy), have applied these neo-liberal policies even more efficiently than the conservative bourgeois parties. A large part of the European trade union movement has backed them in doing this. The EFTU, instead of developing militant trade union activity, has aligned itself with the EC in the name of 'lesser evilism'.

We anti-capitalist parties and movements in Europe struggle against the EU's institutions and policies. We struggle in favour of another Europe - social, democratic, peaceful and based on workers' solidarity - a democratic socialist society. We struggle for a radical change of policy, perspective and society. We struggle to stop immediately the autocratic machined of the Council of Ministers and the permanent Intergovernmental Conference.

Nice opens a new stage in the history of the EU that openly shows its imperialist ambitions, defending, as they say, "it's interests all over the world". The conclusions drawn by the governments of the EU from the Balkan wars will be put into practice.

First, they are creating a European armed force, which will intervene as part of Nato or separately; but with its priority being to stabilise and hegemonise its own periphery. This policy of remilitarization can only succeed if it is combined with a 'Euro-militarist' ideological offensive. We will fight against the rise of the EU's military power as we have previously fought against the militarism of Nato and our own governments.

Second, the Nice summit aims to carry through the economic conquest of Eastern Europe, imposing the neo-liberal rules of the EU upon these countries (the so-called 'acquis communitaire'). For us Europe goes well beyond the EU. We are in favour of voluntarily uniting our continent, but through working class solidarity and co-operation. We propose a joint struggle against the actual policies and institutions of the EU. We are in favour of the free movement of people and are in favour of open immigration into the EU and of their right to full citizenship.

Third, European governments are playing a vanguard role in the WTO in growing inter-imperialist competition with the US and Japan (and some countries of the Third World). The EU governments want to reform the Treaty (Article

133) and give a free hand to the Commission. It is clear that our struggle against the EU is part of the rising struggle against the impacts of capitalist globalisation, especially following the Seattle mobilisation, and in favour of internationalist solidarity with all the oppressed and exploited people in the world.

Fourth, the reform of the EU institutions (the enlargement of qualified majority voting instead of the right of veto; a smaller Commission; reweighting of the countries in the Council of Ministers and giving more voting rights to the big three of Germany, France and Britain; the freer use of 'enhanced co-operation' between some governments in some fields) paves the way for a 'cabinet' of Germany, France and Britain and a much stronger executive leadership. This is the indispensable tool to lead this imperialist Europe in the coming economic, political and military battles on a world scale. We reject this anti-democratic reform as it strengthens the executive power in the EU.

Fifth, the proposed Charter of Fundamental Rights is a radical setback to the rights that the labour movement has won during the past 150 years. The right to work is replaced by 'the freedom' to work under any conditions; the right to a decent living wage and a viable minimum income is replaced by 'social assistance' and philanthropy. The right to strike is not recognised at the European level. This draft charter is a step backwards from most national and international legislation. This reactionary charter might become European law, taking precedence over national laws. The EC might have the right to force its application. The European Court of Justice would have the sovereign power to judge. This charter will be a powerful lever for the bosses and governments to undermine the rights of the working classes. We are opposed to the contents of this Charter and, logically, against its inclusion in the Treaty.

Each of us struggles in our country and all together on a European scale, to reverse this neo-liberal policy, in favour of the principle: social needs before profit. This means: the right to a stable and full-time job for everyone; a decent living wage and state pension (unemployment and sickness benefit), healthcare, housing, education and professional training. This will require: the redevelopment of the public sector and the reorganisation of state budgets, a massive redistribution of wealth from capital to labour and all the necessary anti-capitalist measures to change private property into social property.