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Europe 1992: Bourgeois plans and workers' perspectives

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A. Europe at the centre of the new world situation

1. THE EVENTS that have taken place in Eastern Europe and the open crisis of the Stalinist regimes overturns the order established after World War II. A process has begun during which the landmarks and politico-strategic references forged during 45 years of the ideology of "blocs" are going to become obsolete.

Although at first the collapse of Stalinism could benefit capitalism and social democracy ideologically, and widen the direct or indirect sphere of capital domination, over time there exist a number of destabilizing elements for the imperialist system itself. These fantastic mass movements, mobilizing tens of thousands of workers and youth, also illustrate the explosive charge of democratic demands and the challenge to privileges.

These events change the world situation profoundly, and give the political and social situation in Europe a fundamental role.

The upheavals in Eastern Europe are combined with a thoroughgoing reorganization of the political and economic situation in Western Europe. The perspective of integrating capitalist Europe, and the political and social future of the societies in the East, will not be resolved independently. Both have important implications. Even if at first the question is above all one of political and ideological correlation, the socio-economic factors will play an increasingly important role. For all that, the outcome of struggles in Western Europe will remain essentially determined by the class conflicts that will unfold in each country.

It is not only the existing states and regimes that try to resolve these problems by proposing various organizational deals, from the "common house" to the project of a European confederation. They are also raised for all the political or social movements trying to elaborate a coherent framework for analysis and action. While the course of struggles remains basically determined by the national political situation, social conflicts in Europe increasingly interact and thus require a new overall thinking.

The political conditions for our intervention in Europe, as well as for all revolutionaries and radical militants in the unions and social movements, have therefore changed. This new situation demands a great deal of analysis; it will introduce new discussions around both political perspectives and strategic questions.

The problems of building the Fourth International in Europe have evolved. The dialectic of struggles between Western and Eastern Europe has been reinforced and modified. New ways of building our movement throughout Europe are gradually taking shape, in the perspective of revolutionary parties rooted in their national reality.

2. The world economic crisis is accompanied by a change in the organization of capital with the appearance of new dominant sectors, changes in the international division of labour and in the forms of domination over third-world economies. European capitalist countries are at the centre of these changes.

In this context, the ruling classes are reorganizing by searching to put into place elements to resolve the crisis.

a) Some new technologies have been applied to production, above all in the area of production techniques

themselves, and they have sometimes changed work organization dramatically in industries and the service sector. Profits have been partially re-established since 1984 and the rate of exploitation increased. The questioning of protectionism and the opening up of markets is redefining the terms of competition between different sectors and firms. Mergers and takeovers are accelerating, leading to a colossal strengthening and centralization of capital.

The economic depression does not only mean austerity policies, unemployment and increased poverty. It has contributed to modifying the composition of the proletariat and to shaking up the workers' movement. A new socio-political framework has been sketched out, different from that in which the West European workers' movement was consolidated during the previous 30 years of growth.

b) States have continued to lose their capacity to define their own "national" economic policies confronted by the growing internationalization of economic processes. This exacerbates the contradictions between new requirements to exploit capital, the confines of national states and their continuing social regulatory function.

The Single European Act (SEA) is seen by the bourgeoisies and European multinationals as a dynamic element that could help them out of the crisis. The social relationship of forces are therefore not only played out at factory or workplace level or in terms of strike activity: the stakes are so high for the SEA and the project of an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) that they will weigh on the future relationship of forces.

c) But while the bourgeoisie has made some advances in establishing a new, European context for capital-work relations, the application of new technologies and work organization, none of this is yet sufficiently extensive and nothing has crystallized out in terms of a state structure.

During the crisis up until now, the bourgeoisies have only very rarely carried out a frontal attack against the workers as a whole: profits have been substantially reduced for a whole period but have not collapsed; moreover the strength accumulated by the working class in the preceding period would have made any over-eagerness by the bourgeoisie to go for a rapid showdown adventurist. In spite of numerous debates on the role of the state, the ruling classes have not needed to dismantle the "welfare state". For now, in response to state indebtedness they have been content to qualitatively reduce its scope, something that has hit only a section of the population. In Europe, neo-Keynesian policies have never been totally abandoned. Some of the late 1970s' projects of using the crisis to dismantle fundamental social gains have given way to a more prudent strategy: more of a gradual erosion by stages than a frontal attack.

This is one of the major difficulties for the bourgeoisie: the contradiction between the need to substantially decrease social spending and labour costs while prioritizing the maintenance of general conditions for realizing surplus value. A new equilibrium would need a much more radical change in the world relationship of forces against the working class. Nothing of the sort has yet occurred, even if it is true that some elements of such a deterioration have begun to appear.

d) The other possible perspective for the capitalists could be that of opening up East European markets, beginning with the Soviet Union, alongside the possibility of making sizeable new investments. The bourgeoisie is using the crisis of the Stalinist dictatorships to give itself new political and economic possibilities. The absorption of East Germany by the Federal Republic symbolizes this link between the problems of European integration and the political changes that have occurred in the East.

However, there is already a gap between desires, feasibility and accomplishment. The first steps towards productive investment - substantial and not marginal - in these countries will give rise to new social contradictions even before there is any question of re-establishing capitalism as the dominant mode of production. The bourgeoisie will draw out

from the crisis of the Stalinist dictatorships new political and economic resources for itself.

e) The crisis of US hegemony has deepened over the last ten years. The German and Japanese economies have become higher-performing in many sectors than that of the USA, and have carried along some European economies in their wake. The events in Eastern Europe are helping to undermine the old "Atlanticist" dependencies and allegiances. The whole imperialist defence doctrine is under discussion today.

This is the context of the discussions about a possible European confederation (including some or all of Eastern Europe) or on the role of the CSCE, as the new all-inclusive framework for imperialist-controlled European security.

The Gulf war also touched on these questions by aggravating the discussion among the Western bourgeoisies on the future of Nato, the possible independence of a specifically "European" military set-up and on sharing the arms markets.

B. The threat of the Single Act

3. The Single Act corresponds to the new needs for exploiting capital. Its goal is to create a vast market free from all protectionism, throwing production norms, national regulations, fiscal systems and the conditions in which labour is exploited into free competition. For certain sectors or products, it expresses the collective needs of European industry in the face of Japanese and US competition. But the Single Act also expresses the new needs of the international market in terms of deregulation, restructuring and production alliances that are increasingly realized on a world scale. The idea is to drastically reduce protectionism between OECD countries, leading to sharpening competition and industrial reorganization. So mergers and takeovers do not concern only those between European firms aimed at creating a uniform "European capitalism", but in reality involve the whole industrial and commercial system in the imperialist countries.

4. In this context privatization and deregulation policies have been intensified (including on social protection).

– The social cost of such restructuring has never been taken into account in the elaboration of the Single Act. Far from immediately favouring a homogenization of the industrial fabric, working conditions and social protection, the big market exacerbates regional and social disparities, and none of the a posteriori compensatory mechanisms can seriously pretend to ameliorate the effects of the market.

– Far from resolving unemployment, the Single Act first of all implies a vast movement of restructuring - in industry and the services - leading to job losses. In the new market conditions job creation will not reabsorb structural unemployment or reduce the numbers of those left on the scrap-heap.

The "free circulation" of labour announced by the Single Act remains a utopia that bears no relation to the mass of wage-earners. On the contrary, the divisions in the labour market remain marked, while the circulation of capital is accelerating. This aggravates the disparity between the availability and the demand for jobs.

– The free circulation of capital means revising fiscal systems which reinforce the inequality between income from work and capital. Competing national regulations and norms will increase the downward pressure on wages. It sets different working classes against each other on the grounds of their own bourgeoisie's "national" interests. It increases challenges to statutes, social rights and protection. It also means competition between social regulations, and so particularly opposes the idea of a common social "platform". Nor will the liberal logic that inspires the whole

project escape the arena of management. The reduction of production costs, the development of temporary, part-time and flexible work, the new ease with which production can be decentralized and so on are integral parts of the mechanisms being established. This is why it is useless to simply want to “amend” the Single Act by adding on some corrective social measures. But this is exactly the aim of the “Social Charter”, made up of generalities and “recommendations” that have no more chance of preventing the bosses' attacks and overcoming inequalities than the recommendations contained in the Treaty of Rome had in their time.

5. The project of an Economic and Monetary Union confirms the necessity for the dominant sectors of the European bourgeoisie to push ahead with economic and political integration. It is also an attempt to bring about a lasting solution to financial and monetary chaos that would otherwise be provoked by the free circulation of capital. But such a process will not be realized without a simultaneous political integration. Without such a more or less combined process the whole system is nothing but a house built on sand.

The recessive wave emanating from the USA and already encompassing some European countries is a very serious threat to this difficult operation, since it is absolutely not certain that a European pole around Germany and the Deutschmark will become strong enough in time to avoid this danger.

– This absence of a European state is gradually becoming an objective limit to economic integration. It has become a major problem at a time when the new opportunities in Eastern Europe have revived competition between European bosses. It is a heavy handicap in terms of the bourgeoisie's necessity for common policies concerning defence, security or immigration control, or when it is necessary to make the EC appear as the nucleus of concentric European institutions, including the association of some of the Eastern countries. It is exacerbated by the unequal development inside the EC itself, between West Germany on one end of the scale and Ireland, Greece and Portugal on the other.

– The same problem is found concerning relations with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries. They increasingly have economic relations with EC countries. Measures have already been taken more or less aiming for an alliance. Mergers and combines are increasingly affecting both EC and EFTA firms. But total integration cannot take place while the problems of political integration, defence and “neutrality”, and legislation remain unresolved.

– This difficulty exacerbates the crises inside the bourgeois parties and produces various about-turns in government policies. It divides “national” capitalist sectors from sectors whose interests are largely international. The dilemma stems from the contradiction between objective needs and the difficulty of going beyond the national states, which for the bourgeoisies remain an instrument both for carrying out their domination over the working class and for strengthening their position in relation to international competition, including inside the EC. Abandoning national prerogatives in order to strengthen common institutions is not an easy choice, in particular for the strongest of the bourgeoisies, the German bourgeoisie.

– The question of European institutions concentrates all these issues - the respective role of states, the European Parliament, Commission and Council. All these structures have been set up behind the backs of the populations concerned. None of them can pretend to be democratic.

– In spite of all these difficulties there is already a strong coordination of economic and monetary policies, notably inside the European Monetary System (EMS) where the German Mark plays a pivotal role. There is no doubt that a section of the ruling classes and some governments have shown a clear political desire to overcome objective barriers and as rapidly as possible try to find ways to a proto-European state (whose first stage will be to give the Commission executive power), combined with the existing states. There is now the project of speeding up political integration by following the timetable of EMU in order to be capable of responding to what is at stake in Eastern Europe and the integration of the GDR.

– It is also an attempt to promote growth in Germany and, consequently, in the EC in order to distance themselves as much as possible from the risks of recession.

– The question of the absorption of East Germany is causing new contradictions to appear. The “unification” operation is complicated and strewn with pitfalls for German imperialism and for the whole EC in terms of monetary disorder and the costs involved. The possibility of carrying through at the same time the EMU and the integration of the GDR in the long term will depend on the world economic situation and on German workers' reactions to the social effects of unification. This is also an attempt to encourage growth in Germany and thus in the EEC in order to ward off as far as possible the risks of recession.

This question, while constituting a relative bloc to the integration of the European Twelve, cannot alone provoke a failure or a reversal in the long term of the need for European unification.

6. The EC is heading up the economic and political offensive towards Eastern Europe, as much on the level of proposals for aid, loans and investments as on that of projects for a “confederation” or “federation”.

– But these projects imply that the Community itself will have resolved its own problems of political integration in order to play a role as such. This leads to new tensions inside the Community itself, given the comparative advantages belonging to the different countries and bourgeoisies respectively vis-à-vis Eastern Europe.

– The question of bringing these countries back into the capitalist fold remains a very speculative political project for the bourgeoisie itself. Meanwhile, West European firms and governments have to try to find some openings and win business concessions in exchange for their loans, a partial transfer of technology and convertibility of currencies. They operate in relation to these countries using protectionism, industrial decentralization in search of lower wages, loans given after IMF, World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) interventions, loans with strings attached, and the acquisition of holdings or takeovers resulting in redundancies. For this social peace, political stability and a compromise with governments to broaden investment possibilities is rapidly needed.

– This will introduce a new situation in these societies, notably massive unemployment and big differentiations in wages and status. This is going to raise the questions of unequal exchange and subjection to policies decided elsewhere in a new form (different to that of the dependencies vis-à-vis the USSR).

– The possibilities for aid are, moreover, limited. Investments depend on guarantees offered to investors by the imperialist governments, and they will be given in priority to the countries offering the best infrastructures and most social stability.

7. Unified capitalist Europe itself will continue to be a Europe of women's inequality, of racism and the exclusion of immigrants. Because of the profit logic, it will continue to be unable to solve the big ecological problems, although these are posed at an international level. It will continue to be incapable of resolving the right to self-determination of subjected nations and nationalities, in particular in the North of Ireland and Euskadi, or in colonies such as New Caledonia.

– There is not, strictly speaking, a “European” imperialism. But the EC has found a way of acting in the name of common interests on a series of questions touching on relations with the third world. This Europe, maintaining protectionism vis-à-vis certain products, is no longer capable of respecting its engagements in the framework of the Lomé Convention. It is incapable of sorting out the debt question, whose social cost is paid by the working populations in the countries concerned. The race for slices of the market, the application of new technologies and the manipulation of interest rates that most European bosses and governments participate in have disastrous

consequences for most third-world countries.

It is from the same sort of viewpoint that efforts are made to speed up collaboration between arms manufacturers and to accelerate the establishment of an integrated European defence system.

C. Crisis in the workers' movement and new struggles

8. The establishment of the Single Act is a challenge thrown down to the European workers' movement and to all the social movements. The European workers' movement is, moreover, facing this new international conjuncture in a difficult situation.

– The economic crisis and austerity policies have gradually modified the socio-political conditions in which workers are struggling. In a majority of European countries, the following factors have created a new restricting and difficult context that has helped to divide or isolate struggles: the appearance of a very high level of structural unemployment (above all, youth and long-term unemployment); the development of insecure employment (above all for women and young people), short-term contracts and intermittent work; the decline of collective sectoral negotiations in some countries; the growth of flexibility; the development of external subcontracting; the reduction of numbers employed in the big companies; the crisis, and even disappearance, of certain working-class communities around traditional industries; and, finally, the modification of the industrial fabric. The old strong industrial sectors, whose workers' won many social victories (sliding scale, union rights, collective agreements, social security and so on) that were rapidly extended to the whole of the working class, have gone into crisis and have not yet been replaced or are not yet in a situation to play this role once again.

– These changes have taken place in a particular political context: after the checking of the Portuguese revolution; the controlled transition in the Spanish state; the impasse of the historic compromise in Italy; the failure of the Union of the Left in France; the disastrous austerity policies of the British Labour Party from 1976 to 1979, which helped Thatcher to defeat them; and the disastrous experience of governments led by social democracy in the 1980s (France, Sweden, Greece, Spanish state).

– All this has not happened without leaving its mark on struggles, on their intensity and, above all, their political consequences. The effects have been felt in all the European countries, at different times, through a marked decline in strike activity.

– There have been some important defeats, sometimes with cumulative effects on the whole workers' movement in a country. There has been a visible exhaustion of the generation of the workers' vanguard of the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. Among the layer of advanced workers - that is, the workers' vanguard in the struggles - the idea of socialism has lost support, even more so given that in the preceding period there was not a sufficient accumulation of revolutionary forces giving a credible reply to scepticism and a rejection of the Stalinist model.

– Poverty, job insecurity and social marginalization have hit broad sectors of the population, particularly immigrants and "second generation" young people. The educational system rejects them, the workers' movement is not interested and finds itself incapable of responding to their expectations. Their social revolt takes specific, often violent, forms, and constitutes a new, complex problem of organization and politicization. As the social and economic crisis gets worse this will be a lasting problem and a big question for anyone who really wants unity and mobilization of all the oppressed.

– For several years in a certain number of countries we have seen the growth of extreme-right fascist currents without the workers' movement knowing how to prevent it. Racism has been on the rise, with a marked increase in working-class electors voting for extreme-right parties. These fascist forces, who are beginning to address workers specifically and try to use all aspects of the social crisis and the rottenness of bourgeois parliamentarism, will be a stable feature of the new political situation.

Class consciousness has been weakened by all this. And this situation has led to a weakening of both trade-union and political rank-and-file structures, reducing the arenas where class solidarities are crystallized and reproduced.

– Such is the heritage of the recent past. But the particularities of the economic crisis (which have however left the bourgeoisie some economic room for manoeuvre), as well as the scope of the gains and positions won by the workers' movement during the previous 30 years, have for the moment prevented this being translated into a lasting political and social defeat of the working class.

– The bourgeoisie has remained on the offensive, exploiting a favourable relationship of forces. But men and women workers have resisted: they have prevented the bosses' projects being completely implemented or have defeated them. The same goes for women who have also seen their abortion rights threatened, or for young people confronted by austerity policies in education.

– We have also seen over recent years (unequally according to the country and above all in an unsynchronized fashion) rather significant outbreaks of sporadic struggle. This has not only taken the form of the most intransigent fightbacks but also wage demands in line with the enormous profits made in the recent past, or the demand for reduced working hours. On the basis of these struggles and the relative phase of expansion recently, in some countries or sectors there has been a resurgence of unionization.

Some new types of struggle have appeared, notably in the public services (healthworkers, teachers...) or the most feminized professions, indicating that a renewal of the strong sectors of the working class was underway.

However these struggles take place in a very unequal fashion throughout Europe. We have also seen new forms of self-organization developed to counter the bureaucratism and crisis of the union movement. However, in the absence of a political outcome and overall perspectives these movements sometimes lead to sectoral isolation.

Although they have been massive and very determined, the big struggles of the 1980s have still not led to the cumulative development of a new vanguard generation which would make possible a qualitative leap in building our organizations.

– There have also been a whole series of struggles among young people, beginning with important university and school strikes against austerity policies in education. They show that around concrete demands there is an immense potential for social protest although once again these mobilizations have not represented a political radicalization among young people equivalent in subversive consciousness to that of the end of the 1960s.

– Strong mass movements have been able to develop on trade-union, feminist, anti-militarist or other terrains, mobilizing tens or hundreds of thousands of people. Such movements will continue to develop. But in their development they will also continue to suffer from the absence of credible political possibilities for the satisfaction of their demands.

Conditions are therefore difficult. Structural factors linked to socio-economic changes combine with the attitude of the

trade-union and reformist party leaderships. It is certainly not the case that the working class and a section of young people have no capacity left to engage in overall struggles against the bosses' policies. But the traditional leaderships oppose this perspective; they block any possibility of convergence of partial struggles, which is the only way of inverting the political and social processes set in motion by the crisis.

Big social confrontations and new mass experiences will be necessary to overcome all these handicaps. And the role of revolutionaries in encouraging these processes will be determinant.

9. Under the effects of the crisis, of partial defeats and reformist politics, the organized workers' movement - trade-union and political - has suffered a series of setbacks and is going through important internal transformations today. The crisis of management and dialogue based on Keynesian politics worsens this turmoil.

– In general, the reformist leaderships have been incapable of consolidating the initial struggles against austerity measures. Aside from demagogic measures and propaganda, they have been unable to reply positively to the changes taking place in the proletariat by organizing the unemployed, women, young people or immigrants, as the situation demands. The increasingly pressing demands for democracy and control have been ignored in favour of increasing cynicism, manipulation and corruption inside the ruling bureaucracies.

10. The trade-union movement has not escaped from this crisis.

– Until now, its scope has been very varied depending on the country, since the rate of unionization of wage-workers in Western Europe varies between 5% and 85%. These qualitative differences are explained by specific trade-union and political histories, or by the various degrees of institutional integration. Not all unions have suffered equally from a loss of efficacy and credibility in confronting new social and economic challenges.

– However, everywhere we are seeing a loss of militant resources and an increasing gap developing between the bureaucracy and the base. In every country, to various degrees, the economic and political crisis of the union leaderships has opened up a new situation in terms of relations between workers and unions and the way in which unions organize the rank-and-file. There has been a total impasse of union strategies and an absence of left alternatives sufficiently credible to change the situation.

– The union bureaucracies are looking for a way out of the crisis by increasingly accepting the choices of European capitalists, and by emphasizing their service functions to the detriment of a class-struggle, democratic and unified trade unionism. "Realism" is spreading and has bit by bit acted as a line of compromise with capitalist projects.

– The European TUC - a bureaucratic apparatus par excellence above the national trade-union movements - reflects this crisis and this inability to adapt to the new challenges via its functioning, projects and policies. It is more preoccupied with finding ways to discuss with the European Commission than engaging in a real fight around demands against the whole of the Single Act. It is busier going along with social democracy's European policies.

All these accumulated delays can only end in big setbacks and retreats for the unions in the face of the growing internationalization of production and the bosses' strategies.

– Even when the level of unionization is very low in the workplace or in general, trade-union organizations continue to be a framework for the long-term debates about strategic orientation running through the workers' movement. This in recent years there have been several examples of a rise of workers' struggles and progress recorded by oppositional forces in the trade unions. In periods of deeper crisis, the weakening of the trade union constitutes a mortal threat to

the workers' ability to fight back. Strengthening the oppositional currents in the trade unions is therefore a concrete and immediate condition for their survival. Revolutionary socialists have to step up their fight to organize such opposition currents around immediate demands for the democratization of the union and around a platform of demands which is in practice opposed to the rightwing policies of the union bureaucrats.

11. The social-democratic parties have confirmed themselves as perfect managers for the bosses' policies. They propose themselves as the main political force with the will and capacity to establish the Europe of the Single Act.

– This is not just a conjunctural policy. It corresponds to a new adaptation by the social-democratic leaderships to the new conditions created by the capitalist crisis. It also highlights a certain number of structural changes at the heart of these leaderships, with a symbiosis between the traditional workers' bureaucracies, technocratic factions (petty bourgeois and bourgeois) of the state and public services and managers of the private sector. Theories about the need to build a “New Left” and the new social bloc (including the most modern and enlightened bosses), correspond to these transformations. Unable and unwilling to develop a real policy to defend social gains, social democracy has substituted an ideology of the “new citizen” and of “democracy”, and has abandoned the last vestiges of a class analysis. It has accepted, or has itself orchestrated, policies of privatization, limitation of trade-union rights, increased military spending and so on.

– The working class composition and activist layers of the social-democratic parties have dramatically diminished. But their political and electoral influence has tended to increase in most countries, accompanying the retreats in class consciousness and growing scepticism towards socialism, and partially capitalizing on the crisis of the Communist and far-left parties. Their electors do not have confidence in their projects of big reforms, but even so they sometimes appear as a minimum guarantee in relation to the projects of the right-wing parties, or as the lesser evil. When in power they practice austerity policies and do what the ruling class expects of them. Today's social democracy is reformism without reforms, weighted down with new contradictions, the bearers of internal conflicts - including into the trade-union movements that they control.

12. The Communist parties, for their part, have experienced a massive crisis.

– During the last few years, in most countries - notably those where the CPs have been in a minority in relation to social democracy for a long time - these parties have either collapsed or exploded, sometimes to the point of nearly disappearing.

– In those countries where the CPs have remained mass parties, sometimes majority ones, the crisis has taken various forms combining massive membership losses, total political disorientation, a complete inability to reply coherently to capitalist projects and an incapacity to propose an alternative and credible line on the economic and social crisis, in particular for the trade unions.

– Above all, they have suffered dramatically from all the effects of the Eastern European regimes' crisis and from the disgust they have increasingly inspired among workers. These parties, which grew again after the World War II in reference to the divisions in Europe, have been definitively destabilized by the new world situation, while Gorbachev has no more need for these “fraternal parties” as a transmission belt.

– Centrifugal forces were reinforced as soon as a section of the apparatuses integrated themselves permanently into bourgeois state institutions and when links with the Soviet apparatus lost all their substance.

– The crisis of the CPs partially removes an obstacle that revolutionary Marxists have had to confront for the last 60 years. But, for a time, it could provoke new confusion and demoralization, notably in the trade-union sectors

influenced by them. In a number of CPs, the idea of renouncing any ideas of radically transforming society or renouncing the "Communist" tradition has been common in the majority currents of the leaderships who are seeking to keep their electoral support and present a more "realistic" profile. But this has also been the case for the minority oppositional currents who have been dragged towards social democracy under the pressure of the crisis and the lack of perspectives.

– The development of discussions and splits in the CPs is also determined today by what's happening in Eastern Europe. There, the extreme weakness of those currents claiming to support socialist democracy does not help to give a correct interpretation of Stalinism for those critical sections inside the CPs.

– No substantial and stable left current has yet come out of the crisis of the CPs in Europe, apart from the Greek CP for the moment. A collection of currents inside the CPs are trying to transform themselves into radical forces, centred around "new values" of the "Red-Green" type, aiming at sections of the Greens, the social movements and even the far left. This situation, combined with the weakness of revolutionary Marxists, has negative ideological consequences among certain layers of advanced workers and youth.

13. The Green parties have appeared in the last period as movements winning important electoral victories thanks, in most countries, to the votes of workers and young people. They are often the consequence of a new change taking place inside the left. For example, a section of their activists come from the traditional workers' parties and the far-left.

Up to now, these parties, particularly electorally, have partially captured the discontent and frustrations born out of the political practice of the social-democratic and Communist parties. Faced with the scale of ecological dangers, threats of nuclear war, racism, poverty in the third world and so on, they have appeared as searching for an alternative society on the base of a radical reformism. These parties as such, or a section of their base, are sometimes prepared to get involved in other struggles.

Although the formation of the Green parties could represent a hope for the regroupment of the non-reformist left, in many cases their electoral gains and their integration into institutions brought about new contradictions. In certain cases this has already led to a rapid adaptation to parliamentary politicians' games or to an ideology of "neither left nor right". This could lead to big divisions within them, leaving disoriented a section of their base which demands satisfactory answers both on ecological struggles and a more overall understanding of the misdeeds of capitalism.

14. Among the new forms of political and social activity that have appeared in the last period figure social movements which, around questions of feminism, anti-racism, anti-militarism, pacifism or ecology have been able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people in Europe. Some very important political and social struggles have taken place on these questions, playing a leading role in the activity of sections of the youth, and sometimes posing serious problems to governments. However, these movements have also suffered from the lack of central political perspectives:

– The autonomous women's movement is experiencing an unequal and difficult development, and socialist-feminist currents have declined. There has been a crisis in the peace movement and it now needs to find new themes following the changes taking place in Europe and particularly after the Gulf war. The ecology movement is very dispersed, extremely heterogeneous. The anti-racist movements maintain a real audience among a section of young people, but they will have to respond to new challenges with the rise of the far right.

– For revolutionary Marxists, these social movements are not simply timely opportunities. They represent a phenomenon of new social solidarities in the context of the current capitalist crisis. As for the feminist movement, it

represents the permanent historic need for women's self-organization to fight all the specific forms of their oppression.

It is therefore necessary to build these movements and lead them under the form of permanent, democratic and unitary structures, at the same time carrying out anti-capitalist educational activity within them. In general, we have a lot of catching up to do in our elaboration and propaganda on questions of defending the environment. Solidarity with the third world will continue to mobilize important forces. Themes against poverty in the third world, the question of human rights and the struggle for peace will continue to mobilize a series of people.

– Some of these movements that were born at the end of the 1970s or the beginning of the 1980s have been tests in terms of the crisis of the traditional organizations of the workers' movement. In different ways, according to the country, they have often been a means of getting involved in social actions which were barely or not at all under the control of the traditional bureaucratic leaderships.

– However, the question of the links between these movements and the workers' parties or unions has come up. The latter should have taken their place, as such, in these movements, while conserving their independence, unity and democracy. But, generally, the reformist leaderships have balked at taking on their responsibilities. They became involved in these mobilizations belatedly, or joined in with the goal of manipulating them and draining them of all subversive content. The more the workers' movement has dragged its feet in contributing to these movements and intervening on these questions, the more it has suffered the consequences in terms of losing credibility, particularly among young people.

D. Build our organizations, build the International

15. The political developments in Eastern Europe have already had an important effect on the political debates inside the West European workers' movement. In the early stages the effects are contradictory: they have accelerated the crisis in the Communist parties and put an end to any final illusions in the Stalinist regimes. At the same time, for the majority of workers they have increased disillusionment in the fight for socialism and reinforced the confusion between democratic freedoms and bourgeois parliamentary democracy, identified with the market economy.

– The struggles in the East are unfolding when the workers in the developed capitalist countries have already suffered 15 years of economic crisis and various setbacks. Illusions about the Western model are not, for the moment, contradicted by the echo of a revolutionary movement in Western Europe, the USA or Japan. In the present conditions, there is no synchronization of two revolutionary workers' movements - one carrying out the political revolution to re-establish a democratic-socialist project, and the other involved in large-scale, political, anti-capitalist struggles.

16. New tasks for revolutionary Marxists flow from all this, but also new conditions for building our organizations in Western Europe.

– The social and political crisis and the weakening of the workers' movement have led to our forces stagnating, if not regressing. So it is with still modest means, but sometimes with a broader social implantation than in the past, that we must continue our efforts.

– The crisis of the workers' movement is not reducible simply to the problem of replacing a failed leadership by a new

one, potentially existing and already being crystallized in the heart of the struggles and traditional organizations (parties and unions). It is going to be a much longer process of rebuilding forces and reorganizing the working class at all levels - social, trade-union and political. This will pass through a prolonged process of accumulating experiences, with the emergence of a new generation of advanced workers and radicalized youth.

– In general, the exercise of trade-union and political bureaucratic control over all the activities of the working class and the youth is increasingly difficult. Thus, new forms of radicalization occur in a combined way both inside and outside the traditional organizations. But the present crisis of the workers' movement should not be interpreted as though the old leaderships have already been subjectively bypassed. Although having more and more problems in concretely organizing a militant and working-class base, the reformist parties - beginning with social democracy - continue to have a majority influence electorally and via the trade-unions. Sometimes, particularly in Western Germany, the main European industrial country, the trade-union leaderships still have considerable control over struggles. It is therefore necessary to have a line of intervention that takes this reality into account, as well as the level of consciousness of the broad sectors still controlled by the traditional leaderships. This should allow us, as possibilities open up, to combine party-building tactics inside or outside the traditional organizations (including in the revolutionary left, the Greens or among currents leading the social movements).

17. In the present conditions our organizations must get used to patient, long-term work.

– In spite of the struggles and our propaganda efforts, it remains difficult to recruit to our organizations and to qualitatively increase membership. In spite of the progress we have made in terms of our implantation and sometimes our improved capacities for agitation, we must still give a big place to education and propaganda.

– The rightward evolution of a number of oppositions or splits from the reformist parties, the slide to the right of the Green parties and the crisis of the far-left puts revolutionary Marxists in a difficult situation. These are the same general reasons which favour a crisis of disorientation both of far-left forces and of oppositional, critical currents in the reformist parties or breaking with them. In the last few years, working-class struggles have not been able to exert enough pressure on these currents to make them keep - or return to - a radical, anti-capitalist orientation. The political difficulties specific to the period have made them more vulnerable to impressionism, to a loss of confidence in workers' struggles and an adaptation to "realism". Our own weakness has also weighed negatively on their evolution. The fact that until now currents in Eastern Europe inspired by democratic socialism remain in a small minority accentuates the confusion of those breaking with the CPs or with social democracy in Western Europe.

– In general we can say that the crisis of the left also opens new possibilities for addressing the members of other organizations. We must seize these possibilities. We should participate in the discussions within the left. We should take initiatives for practical joint campaigns. The important precondition for any united initiative in a time of decline and dissolution for big sections of the left is politically arming ourselves and clearly understanding our goals.

The crisis of the far-left and all the centrist currents also makes our policy of alliances and regroupments more difficult and uncertain. When these are possible, in each case it is a question of a specific orientation. In the current political situation, it is now more difficult to have decisive tests in the course of the class struggle which ensure the longterm success of these convergences.

So we have to be able to carry through such processes by our own political contribution and the specific, non-sectarian activity of the International in relation to our partners.

– Our political perspectives are still situated in a non-revolutionary period. The crisis itself poses the question of unity in sharper terms. This makes it possible for our organizations to take unitive non-sectarian initiatives and to find

renewed forces for intervening and touching new circles. But massive social upheavals are not on the agenda in capitalist Europe on a scale that would develop the political and social bases for the emergence of small revolutionary parties regrouping even some tens of thousands of members.

– We follow the real process of differentiation as it is concretely manifested in each country, without rejecting any opening that has acquired mass influence and composition as “petty bourgeois” or “bureaucratic”. Above all, we do not judge developments purely by ideological criteria, but in light of the objective effects they have on the unfolding class struggle, on the differentiations inside the working class and on the crisis in the traditional parties.

– We must continue or strengthen attempts to implant our organizations in the workplaces (industry or the public sector). We must reassert the importance of our trade-union work. The question of building a trade-union opposition standing for democratization of the unions and a fight against austerity remains a priority tasks for our sections. But given the background of the current crisis in the unions it is not sufficient simply to oppose the line of the bureaucrats. The opposition currents should take responsibility for building and organizing the union as such. The opposition is vital for attracting broader and broader layers which are turning away from the unions, considering them as simply the property of the bureaucracy.

In trade-union work it is important to take up a series of political question, such as what is happening in Eastern Europe. A specific task is also to win support in the unions for solidarity tasks. The need to fight against the consequences of growing capitalist integration multiplies these tasks.

– New forms of organization and campaign are necessary to address the most marginalized layers (unemployed, certain layers of young people and immigrants). We consider this as a task of the whole workers' movement. But today our organizations should already be trying to take this kind of initiative.

– The feminist activity of our parties has to be strengthened and must take into account the appearance of workers' struggles with a strong female composition (the resolution on the women's movement in Western imperialist countries takes up these points).

– Building revolutionary youth organizations - in forms appropriate to each country - must remain a priority so that we have the means for a specific intervention and for recruitment in all the movements where young people are active; and, in addition, to create the conditions for education and generational renewal in our ranks. The leaderships of sections must pay much greater attention to this and assure the continuity of the youth work. There must continue to be activity directed towards high schools and universities, places where there is a very great concentration of young people, confronted with government austerity policies.

– Building broad, united movements to mobilize against fascism and racism is an urgent task and absolutely central task in many countries, in which our sections can and must play a central role.

The Gulf war has moreover opened up a new situation. The new and decisive challenges posed during this war must be answered. The formation and more generally the participation in anti-war or anti-militarist movements is a priority task for all our organizations. They could provide new experiences of political activism and thus encourage the politicization of sections of the pacifist movement.

We should, while respecting the rhythm and needs of the movement in each country, aim for united, joint European initiatives around all question of militarization.

– Within several states, oppressed people are fighting for their emancipation and the recognition of their national rights. Their demands go from use of their national language to independence.

Three of these peoples (Ireland, Euskadi and Corsica) have maintained a high level of mobilization of the mass movement. The organizations which lead them have been capable of waging mass political and electoral campaigns.

The framework of the existing states has proved to be unable to satisfy the demands for emancipation. The introduction of the Single European Act, despite some possible administrative reforms, will only increase their dependence.

We are part of these struggles and we support them within the ruling states, particularly through a continuous intervention in the trade-union movement. We defend unconditionally the right to self-determination, including independence. In this framework we defend the immediate interests of the workers as well as the perspective of a socialist solution to all national questions.

The Conference of the Stateless European Nations (CONSEU) is a first unitive initiative for joint campaigning activities. We are in favour of such an approach continuing.

We should establish a reputation as defenders of the oppressed nations, so that their most consistent representatives turn towards us, considering us as their natural allies.

18. The workers' movement remains riddled with national and sectarian prejudices. In these conditions, the European "social dialogue" is a trap and a dreadful illusion. The bourgeoisie's project must be opposed by an intransigent defence of demands and gains. In the EC and EFTA countries, workers' parties and unions must oppose the Single Act and the whole project of European integration. The workers' movement has nothing to win by co-managing these policies. What is necessary first of all is a relationship of forces based on social mobilizations, coordinations [strike committees] and solidarity going beyond national frontiers.

– It is urgent to spell out a plan to defend the trade-union movement when restructuring and international mergers are increasingly dividing union organization. It is vital to explain incessantly what these European policies will lead to in order to educate workers and create the conditions for a united struggle. All the initial experiences of consultation and coordination between unions inside the multinationals should be exploited and extended.

Against the capitalists' Europe we put forward:

a) The necessity for a new internationalism, that is, the development of all forms of solidarity, coordination and campaigns that break with national isolation and oppose the bourgeoisie's projects. Our approach is to start from the day-to-day demands in each country and to demonstrate in practice their convergence. We encourage solidarity initiatives across multinationals and sectors. The same goes for meetings and initiatives of combative union sectors who want to fight against austerity policies and against the Europe of the Single Act. We must encourage European-wide links and initiatives by feminist, anti-racist, peace, anti-militarist and ecology movements, as well as all the movements among youth.

We undertake similar activities vis-à-vis the struggles and the independent movements in the Eastern Europe states, because struggles against the Single Act should not lead to a blinkered view of internationalist tasks. We aim to promote all possible convergences between mobilizations in the East and the West. We also welcome all possibilities of organizing forums for discussion and meetings between left organizations in East and West Europe.

In the different countries the bourgeoisie's plan must be opposed by a radical refusal to lose any social advantages in the name of competition in the European market. There must be the organization of a permanent fightback against austerity policies in order to defeat them. Current economic developments in Europe are not a justification for turning to so-called national or indeed chauvinist solutions. On the contrary, the situation requires that demands express common goals and needs (35 hours, on night work, democratic rights, self-determination and so on). In the more backward countries on the question of social rights, the left can fight for the most advantageous norms won elsewhere. Little by little we should spread the preoccupation of having struggles which converge between the different countries.

b) Propaganda for an alternative to the bosses' Europe: the United Socialist States of Europe. For us it is a transitional approach of socialist education within our conception of the world socialist revolution, against all exploitation and oppression. This socialist propaganda will only have any chance of being gradually understood by new radicalized generations if on many subjects we know how to start from immediate demands to then give them a very concrete and detailed transitional content (ecology, education, national rights, direct democracy, equality between men and women, health, and so on). This is a way of clarifying, on the basis of struggles, the vision of another society, counterposed to the populist and demagogic answers of the far right.

The Fourth International and its parties in Europe must be in the vanguard of all these activities. It is by doing this boldly that we can demonstrate the usefulness of our organizations and the validity of our internationalism. We must improve the functioning and relations between our parties so as to create the best conditions for this: collaboration and elaboration by sector, joint campaigns and initiatives, the youth camp and so on.

19. The process of German unification under the auspices and to the benefit of the FRG is a new element in the European situation and the relationship of class forces. The absorption of the GDR by the FRG would be first of all a victory and a strengthening of German imperialism. This, combined with an advance of European integration, would have important political, social and ideological effects both in Germany and also throughout Europe. Moreover, for a whole period this will modify the hierarchies and relationships of the political, economic and military forces within the EC.

The effect of this unification at first would be to create new divisions and exclusions in the working class and to increase political confusion.

It is important to ensure that the workers increasingly advance their own demands in the face of the capitalist appetites of the West German bourgeoisie. The workers' movement in Germany and in Europe as a whole must refuse to carry the costs of unification to the benefit of the big industrial companies and the banks. Particularly within the former GDR, there has to be a fightback organized to mass unemployment, to attacks on the system of social protection, to reductions in real wages, to rights won such as to abortion,. The principle of powerful, independent, democratic trade unions must be defended. The cut-price sales of enterprises to West German or foreign capitalists should be denounced. Wages should be immediately brought into line with those in West Germany. Finally, there should be a refusal to pay the bill for a unification which serves the big industrial groups: against the drop in public spending on social services, education, etc; for a stop to military spending.

Military pacts must be denounced and mobilizations organized for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Germany, for the withdrawal of American troops and armaments from Europe, for the de-nuclearization of Europe, for the immediate reduction of military budgets, against the militarization and dragooning of young people, and against the project of European defence. Just as it dominated the beginning of the 1980s, the struggle against militarism could become one of the key battles of the 1990s in Western Europe.

20. The political discussions that will continue to develop in Eastern Europe will be centred around big questions

such as economic reform, trade-union perspectives, workplace management, demilitarization, women's right to work and to abortion, ecological questions, freedom of political expression and, sometimes national and regional questions. This should also enable us to demonstrate that such questions are also on the agenda in Western European countries: social protection, trade-union rights, ending military spending, the right to local referenda around popular initiatives such as the protection of the environment or the right to self-determination, and so on.

Pro-market and privatization policies are widely applied in Eastern Europe, and at first divide workers by satisfying the expectations of a section of them in terms of consumption and income. But they rapidly give rise to new discontent in countries that are not used to unemployment and big wage differentials. Selling off national industries cheaply to Western investors or dismantling firms that are decreed to be non-profitable, inflation, the policies of the multinationals, the IMF, the World Bank and the EC, attacks on social security and the appearance of nouveaux riches - sometimes give rise to disapproval. Even before the beginnings of a capitalist class develops, the supporters of the market will be confronted by a strong imperialist pressure in total contradiction with their nationalist and populist professions of faith.

On all these questions it is extremely important that our organizations in capitalist Europe play a central role in terms of information and propaganda and show themselves capable of organizing active solidarity with those who are fighting back. This should be part of the normal activity of our European sections in the new continent-wide context.

21. In spite of the specific tactical problems of building our organizations we are confronted by problems that cannot be substantially resolved without an overall consideration of all the changes in Europe and thus without a collective European framework for elaboration. For example, this relates to anti-militarist work, to our policies at the time of European elections, to solidarity work with social resistance in Eastern Europe to imperialist policies and market mechanisms; to the activities of the social movements (feminist, ecologist, anti-racist, youth movements and so on); or again in relation to changes in the trade-union movements and new forms of workers' struggles.

To deal with these problems we have to promote meetings between comrades working in the same sector or in the same areas of mass work insofar as this is practically possible for us. But what is needed above all is a stable system of collaboration, dialogue and reflection between the section leaderships. We need at least one meeting a year for delegations from Political Bureaus for both an exchange of experience and the preparation of joint activities. Our aim is to establish eventually a network of cadres who are capable of following through increasingly important activities in a European-wide framework.