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Our tasks in imperialist Europe

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1. Our general tasks in the period before us are the following:

1) to be part of the struggles, mobilisations and resistance against the capitalist-imperialist counter-offensive at every level, as much on the national as the international plane, and play an important role in the mass organisations;

2) to struggle to reverse the disastrous neo-liberal orientation which today dominates the workers' movement under the aegis of the social democracy, and progress in the elaboration of a left programme and political perspective;

3) to intervene actively in the historic crisis of the traditional workers' movement to advance towards a new political force - anti-capitalist and socialist - which responds to this crisis and the demands of the new objective situation.

2. the struggle against unemployment has become a permanent trait in the countries of imperialist Europe. It has had disastrous effects - social, political and moral - on the whole of society and notably on youth. The bourgeoisie has neither the capacity nor the will to resolve this appalling problem. The suppression of unemployment is then at the heart of any alternative strategy. Knowing the current relations of forces between Capital and Labour, in society but also in every workplace, our response cannot be routinist. It does not only concern the workers and the unemployed. The suppression of this mass unemployment must become a stake for the whole of society. It must mobilise all its resources of resistance, energy and creativity. It must base itself on the workers and trade unions movement, but also go beyond it, addressing itself to the whole of the social movement. The solution proposed cannot be routinist.

The right to a job for all is both a social and a democratic demand, for it is the road to a decent income, a useful place in society, a recognition as citizen. As revolutionary Marxists, we take it up in all its subversive potential in relation to the current dominance of the market economy; it obligates a global reversal of political priorities and consequently a social revolution. The struggle for the reduction of working hours presents itself under different aspects. In the first place, the demand for "the reduction of working hours without loss of wages and with compensatory hiring" can take several concrete forms as response, either to a reduction imposed by the bosses or by the neo-liberal policy of "work sharing" or as part of the list of demands made by the trade union movement during collective conventions in and enterprise or a sector.

A second aspect concerns the possibility, at certain times, of creating the widest united front, including with the reformist leaderships, around a unifying slogan of "35 hours without loss of pay" to be realised through legislation. It amounts in this case to a slogan of a more limited social impact, even if it could be a trampoline to retake the offensive on this terrain, to unify all the sectors of the working class in its exceedingly various statuses and to reinforce the global relation of forces. But these two types of "reduction of working hours" do not really suppress unemployment at the scale of society. From whence a third aspect of the struggle, namely a very much more radical reduction of working time (say to 32 or 30 hours) - without loss of salary and with compensatory hiring. A tough demand, efficient and inspiring, it appears unrealisable given the current relation of forces. It can only be convincing if it takes up from the beginning a whole range of social and technical conditions of its implementation; workers (and social) control) over the enterprise in relation to the intensity of work, the environment and the economic finality; reorganisation of labour to assure its feasibility from the technical-economic point of view and that of the life of the workers; financial aspects given the unequal conditions of competition (compensation funds); financing of such a plan (which raises the question of taxation).

Such a plan, as global as it is radical, only makes sense on the European level, not only because of the impossibility of putting it into practice in a single country given current economic conditions, but also because it assumes an economic recovery and reorganisation on a vast scale in terms of social needs on the international plane, throughout Europe to begin with. It raises moreover some very much wider questions of society; the meaning of work even; the level of wages maintained in relation to the conditions of existence of the proletariat in the rest of the planet; the mode of consumption and its relation to the alienation of leisure time and the limited resources of the planet; male-female relations in general and in relation to household work in particular; the role of the public services (notably the collective equipment). In the background there is the question of political and economic power within society, and the necessity of a social revolution. We must approach the other major social questions in the same spirit; social security; the school and permanent training; housing, health, life in the cities. It is at the same time the means to fuse these problems with the different aspects of the world ecological crisis.

3. The struggle of women against their oppression and patriarchal structures will also be a powerful factor of struggle against capitalism and the re-launching of an emancipatory perspective for humanity. The cycle of the feminist movement of the 1965-1980 years was closed by some significant advances; the suppression of legal inequality; the massive presence of women in public life, notably on the labour market; the conquest of a certain economic independence; the entry into crisis and the decline of patriarchal structures, in particular the family. Meanwhile, the women's movement as such has decomposed, notably by the recuperation of a sector of the movement and its integration into the cogs of the bourgeois state, thanks to a certain number of reforms "from above". Only a small active nucleus of socialist feminists and radical feminists subsists which resists the attacks against certain gains of the movement. The oppression of women persists, although being displaced; legal equality has not suppressed the social inequality de facto present everywhere in society including in the social movements; inequality of wages for comparable work persists.

Moreover, the prolonged crisis imposes a growing burden on the backs of women and the bourgeois policy puts in question a certain number of gains of the preceding period. In addition to this, there is a crying contradiction between the progress of women on the legal and in part economic and social planes on the one hand and their marginalisation indeed total exclusion as to the political processes and leadership bodies. With the question of work (notably night work, household work) sexual and physical violence (harassment in the workplace, the rape of children and women inside the family), the political democratic question is already a key aspect of these debates (quotas, parity) of the future. International solidarity is manifested by a new raising of consciousness of the role of women in war and massive repression (ex-Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Chechnya, Argentine, Guatemala....). This multitude of resistance has not yet led to the redevelopment of a true overall organised movement, but it is certainly on the order of the day and we should contribute to it with all our forces. This confirms the urgency of the reform of our own organisations so that women can play their role.

4. Youth have not ceased to mobilise throughout the 1980s and 1990s. But this mobilisation concerned the great moral questions (the threat of) war (Such as the installation of the missiles); against racism and fascism; aid for the third world; or in a more sectoral sense around the school. It is the ecological question which has penetrated profoundly the two most recent generations, creating a more global political consciousness. All this activity has taken place, in very many countries in total rupture with the ideological climate of 1968. The "market" and "post-Socialist" atmosphere, with a spectacular loss of historic, social and political landmarks, has strongly weighed on the level of radicalisation and the type of politicisation among youth. An enormous distance thus appears between the degree of consciousness and political engagement and the revolutionary Marxist programme, except for a very small nucleus of youth. The discredit into which the "market economy" has again fallen after the brief euphoria, reopens a broader space on the properly ideological plane for a left, and in particular, Marxist explanation. This globally unfavourable evolution contrasts with the fact that the young generation comes up socially against actually existing capitalism. This generation will be the first, for some decades, whose future perspectives will be more modest than those of the former generations, in particular those of their own parents. Moreover, more precociously "emancipated" in relation to the tutelage of their parents, it is less able to win its own economic independence, unable to find a stable and complete job. This contradiction creates considerable social tensions which have already led to widespread

struggles, but it also provokes a number of acts of despair, unequalled since the post war period (drugs, suicides, flights from the school and the family, total social marginality).

Our intervention among youth, inasmuch as it is in struggle, is a decisive question for the construction of a revolutionary socialist organisation. It must start from the real movement among the youth - its social existence, its cultural behaviour, its forms of organisation and expression, its specific level of radicalisation - and be extricated from the sometimes complicated tactical considerations which our parties need to find their way in the workers' movement today. The organisation of an international youth camp is a striking success both in the level of participants, the internationalist and enthusiastic spirit, and the recruitment of a layer of youth steeped in this experience.

5. The left intelligentsia has massively deserted political engagement and capitulated before neo-liberalism during the 1980s and 1990s. This has constituted a factor of deterioration in the relation of forces for the working class and its anti-capitalist wing. It is all the more important to enter in dialogue with the sectors or individuals who have resisted, and with those who, on their own professional terrain, resent the disastrous effects of the progress of "commodification", passing from an ethical opposition to a wider social comprehension, and are susceptible to engagement at the sides of the anti-capitalist social movement.

6. We have a particular political task in relation to the third world. Beyond efforts of solidarity against repression, of support to the significant struggles and mobilisation to contain imperialist attempts to crush or smother a (semi-) revolutionary breakthrough. We must alert public opinion, put pressure on our governments, alert the workers and social movements to relieve immediately the terrible poverty which affects a growing part of the ex-colonial countries. The struggle for the cancelling of the debt and against the IMF and the World Bank constitutes a concrete and useful objective for these countries, at the same time raising the question of their dependence/ recolonisation and opening the road to new forms of anti-imperialist struggle.

7. Our organisations are strongly involved in the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles and movements. The objective must be to place this combat on the European level. This applies in particular to the struggle against the Schengen accord which furnishes by itself a unifying objective. While some very representative networks exist in our respective countries which are co-ordinated at the level of the EU, it is necessary to note that they have not had the capacity to organise a concerted and combative action. This was and remains our objective. On the level of anti-fascism, the active movement consists of the radical nuclei which act regularly in all the countries and which enable, punctually, an "enlarged" mobilisation thanks to the strong sensibility and openness of the "democratic" and "left" organisations on this question. Some attempts at co-ordination exist on the European level. Overall there exists a certain level of alertness on which it is necessary to build so as to respond in a united and international manner to the events which are to come. Given the persistence of the fascist parties and far right and their installation in society and in the state apparatus, an important debate on political orientation exists in which we must intervene.

8. We have to note the extreme weakness of the anti-war movement, in relation to the military conflicts in eastern and central Europe (ex-USSR, ex-Yugoslavia) above all if comparison is made with the response to the Gulf War. If the passivity of the workers' movement under reformist leadership is not a surprise, on the other hand, the "peace movement" - active, massive and radical for two decades - has entered into deterioration. Forces in a very small minority, like our own, have tried to react in the context of an indignant but passive public. The pursuit of the International Workers Aid campaign is all the more important, by its exemplary character (both here and in ex-Yugoslavia) and in order to form links with the best elements which resist in ex-Yugoslavia. An analogous activity should be launched against the brutal war of the Yeltsin government against the Chechen people.

9. We have to note the almost total absence of the active workers movement on the European scale. The reason is not technical (absence of material means) but political; the subordination to the national state and the EU which are imposed by social democracy and the (trade union wing) of Christian democracy in the traditional workers movement,

which paralyses any extensive action around fundamental demands (like the widening of the struggle for the 35 hour week at IG Metall) all European solidarity with a particular struggle (the delocalisation of an enterprise inside the EU) and any overall social alternative at the level of the EU. We must put do all we can to break this lead fetter, by solidarity action with strikes, the circulation of information on struggles, on demands, of trade union platforms. Three elements must be singled out:

– the use of European enterprise committees which are multiplying and which, despite all their limits, furnish the means for meetings between (combative) trade union militants;

– persuading trade unions to take European initiatives of co-ordination of their sector (like the telecommunications meeting at Brussels at the beginning of 1995)

– working towards a demonstration and an assembly of the European left as a social and internationalist alternative at the intergovernmental conference planned for 1996. The construction of an active workers' movement in Europe starts from a modest scale. It necessitates on our part

– a programmatic and political elaboration, going beyond our as yet very general position (see the resolution on the EU at this world congress) so as to influence the traditional workers' movement and

– an effort at political and practical rapprochement with those left currents which reject the Maastricht policy of the EU and its member states.

10. This activity of our organisations - multiple and by definition dispersed - must find its unity and its strength by a political battle to break the neo-liberal (and "Europeanist") political programmatic yoke of the Social Democratic and Christian Democratic apparatuses. The credibility of the neo-liberal policy does not reside in the strength of its content or in the militant organisational strength of social democracy, but in the difficulties which strike the active and radical left wing of the social and workers' movement; a feeling of the political impotence of the mobilisations and struggles and consequently of alternative programmatic propositions; a lowering of the average "socialist" consciousness of the popular masses; a fallback in the organisational engagement of the practical vanguard; ideological weakening of the radical left; and all this takes place whereas the working class, the women and the youth maintain an exceptionally high level of activity making allowance for the poor socio-economic conditions which persist. It is in this general situation that we must contribute to the programmatic rearmament of the social and workers' movement. This must become a decisive task in the period following the world congress.

11. This task cannot be conceived independently of the upheavals affecting the traditional workers' movement. The principal aspects are the following;

– the weakening of the organic and social links of the trade union organisations and the working class and consequently the weakening of the social control of the trade union bureaucracy on its own cadres and militant, and on the class - an unprecedented loss of legitimacy of the class collaborationist and counter revolutionary apparatuses (combination between the historic defeat of Stalinism and the new stage of organisational, moral and political degeneration of social democracy) which henceforth puts in doubt their capacity to contain future upsurges or social explosions;

– the emergence of political currents and social movements, which do not belong to the historic workers' movement, but possess a critique of bourgeois society and a will for social change. Faced with the wide ranging crisis of bourgeois society, the historically new situation of the traditional workers' movement, and the potentiality of new extensive upsurges, the response of the revolutionary left, itself struggling for survival as a political factor in the

workers' movement and in society, cannot limit itself to propaganda for the construction of a (small nucleus) of the revolutionary party and the revolutionary programme, opposed to the rest of the traditional workers' movement and its reformist variants, to some campaigns which call for the united workers front but which are in fact nothing other than a means of ideological and organisational self-affirmation.

Before any improbable short term break by social democracy with the neo-liberal and Europeanist line of the last 15 years, before a recurrent polarisation between the social democratic leadership and the trade union movement still capable and obliged to enter into struggle for the important immediate demands - the pertinent political cleavage - profound, broad and practical, affecting the everyday fate of the mass of the workers, women and youth - is not currently between "reform and revolution" but between this consistent neo-liberal policy of the social democracy and an alternative policy which refuses to subordinate the struggle for immediate demands and for radical reforms to the needs of neo-liberalism, and which in practice is opposed to the fundamentals of the market economy and its political institutions.

Between social democracy and the revolutionary left there is a vast ideologically reformist current either opposed to or more often "outside" the strategic question of the revolutionary crisis, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the conquest of political power by the working class and the organisation of the workers' vanguard in a revolutionary party based on such a programme. It is the product of the decomposition of the social democracy and Stalinism. It is politically heterogeneous and unstable but often very representative of the current social movement.

To the extent that these sectors of this current oppose social democratic policies and are ready to struggle for radical reforms, they constitute a very important element both for the social, political and electoral struggle, for the progressive emergence of a new anti-capitalist and socialist programme and for the convergent activities which can bring together these still disparate political currents and forces, opening thus not only some possibilities of unity of action but also an overall debate on political orientation and the need for a new political formation of the working class. It is decisive and vital for our organisations - revolutionary Marxist nuclei - to be participating in or initiating, under an appropriate form depending on the country, this process of re-composition of the social and workers' movement.

12. Our organisations and our functioning as the Fourth International in Europe must be adapted to this new political situation. This implies above all that we continue in the coming months a reinforcement of the links between our organisations in Europe. Faced with the weakening of the militant and material means of the national organisations, and the distancing of the links between them, it amounts to re-establishing at an elementary level the pooling of our analyses, our political and programmatic propositions, our political-intellectual resources, regularising the financial and material contributions of each national organisation to the international centre, as well as circulating information, generalising the activities of the campaigns already underway (notably making a balance sheet of their weaknesses) to seize the opportunity that the class struggle offers to act in common. This primary reinforcement has become, in the present situation, virtually a prerequisite - if not all the propositions for campaigns of action on the European scale smack of rhetoric. On the organisational level, it is necessary to give priority to the annual meeting of the European Political Bureaux and the two meetings each year of the European secretariat, and to set up the network of regular information between the sections and with the leadership of the International.