

European Action Programme

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The crisis of the European Union

Meeting in Lisbon in March 2000, the leaders of the European Union, on the initiative of its dominant powers, Germany and France, pledged to "make Europe, by 2010, the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world". Two decades later, the European Union has instead become the "weakest link" in the imperialist world order. In fact, disorder would be a better term for a world of rival powers, engaged in trade wars, new wars both cold and hot, plus a refusal to do anything serious which could avert a climate catastrophe and global conflicts. Within the Union itself, open struggles over the nature and future of the organisation have broken out, including its third largest economy trying to leave.

Only the working class, today a larger social force worldwide than ever before, can put a stop to this by a revolutionary seizure of power and a socialist plan of production which can save humanity and the natural environment. Yet the leaders of its mass organisations, political and trade union, have repeatedly proved themselves incapable of even posing, let alone fulfilling, these tasks.

The introduction of the Euro at the turn of the century, and the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, were aimed at turning what was already the largest market in the world into a common European capital bloc. This would mean nothing less than the political and military unification of the continent under German and French dominance. Its leading politicians stated, albeit guardedly, that they wanted to catch up with the US and to challenge its role globally.

They set out a series of policies to unify the EU economically:

- to complete implementation of a continent wide, neo-liberal agenda, allowing large scale monopolies to take over what had not yet been privatised and commercialised;
- to introduce more "reforms" in the labour market and social services, that is, a programme to slash labour and trade union rights, increase exploitation and reduce both welfare and the "social wage", thereby creating a massive cheap labour force within both the main imperialist countries and the weaker semi-colonial states of Eastern and Southern Europe;
- resume the expansion of the EU and the Euro-zone under the direct control of German and other leading imperialist powers, making new entrants a semi-colonial area under their control.
- to subordinate the entire European financial system, and the member states' financial and economic policies, to stronger control by the European Central Bank (ECB) through European agreements and European institutions, themselves dominated by the large and most competitive powers of the continent
- the creation of "European champions", that is, large-scale monopolies that would transcend the existing nationally based capitals, thereby create banking, industrial and service sectors able to compete with US, Japanese and Chinese competitors
- the unification of European research and development as well as the education systems in order to the

fulfil the goal of the largest ?knowledge-based economic area?

- the unification of security services, the creation of European battle groups, and various steps towards forming a European army.

- expansion of free movement of finance, goods and labour within the EU, whilst sealing its borders via common agreements (Schengen, Dublin, ?), to create what has been called Fortress Europe

All this required ideological justification as the creation of an area of ?democracy? and ?peace?, of progress, social well-being, human rights and, recently, world leadership in addressing the environmental crisis.

These claims were always false. From the Treaty of Rome to the racist border controls of today, the EU and its predecessors were always projects of the major imperialist powers of the continent, initially in close collaboration with the US, but later in an increasingly competitive relationship.

In the 1990s, and even in the early 2000s, the EU was clearly on the ascendant. The victory of the West in the Cold War opened up Eastern Europe to European big capital with German imperialism leading the way. Re-unification made it easily the strongest power of the continent, well ahead of its French, British or Italian partners and rivals.

The rise of the EU had been driven by the alliance of German and French imperialism, personified in the close collaboration of Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand, then under Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder. They also embodied a European wide coalition between conservatives and social democrats to drive forward the European project.

The EU in the 21st century

However, the 21st century has brought to the surface the deep contradictions that the ?European project? had from the beginning. Millions of workers and peasants, and even large sections of the ?middle classes?, have been disillusioned by the policies of the European Commission, the ECB, the leaders and key ministers of the big European powers.

At the turn of the century, with the hailing by the world's leaders of an era of globalisation, neo-liberal policies were regarded as an inseparable component of this supposed new world order. The European Union witnessed a turn towards what had hitherto been regarded as the ?Anglo-Saxon? model. The major powers and the EU institutions adopted the path of ?free market reforms?. For millions, the promises of a ?Social Europe?, prosperous ?democratic? and ?humanitarian? made in the previous era were revealed as brazen lies.

The 2000 Lisbon Agenda, with its emphasis on austerity, ?labour market reform? and competitiveness marked not only a clear shift in the policy of the EU, but also a rejection of ?welfarism? and Keynesianism by all the European bourgeoisies. Not only conservative parties but also Labour and social democratic parties, adapted to neo-liberalism. Indeed, without Blair?s ?Third Way? or Schröder?s ?New Centre? policies, the adoption of the neo-liberal agenda would have been impossible or would at least have met with much more resistance and friction.

The leading powers and the European Commission intended not only to push through the Lisbon Agenda but also a neo-liberal constitution for the European Union. However, this met with mass opposition by the population and was rejected in referenda in France and the Netherlands.

The response from the European governments and institutions was instructive. Having seen their proposed constitution rejected, they re-introduced it as a Treaty. This made the ?democratic deficit" of the EU plain to millions. It also made clear that there are ?social? as well as environmental and other deficits which lie behind this lack of European democracy. It confirmed that the ruling classes cannot, and will not, unite the

European continent in a democratic, let alone a "social" way. Indeed, it testified that they are prepared to completely ignore the "will of the people".

This is particularly true with regard to the spheres of finance, foreign policy, interventions and wars. The European governments never asked "their" peoples whether they should bomb Syria or Libya or occupy Iraq, whether they should intervene in Mali or other African states, or whether they should meddle in the Ukraine. Nor did they consult their peoples on whether to conclude new European military treaties, or support the expansion of NATO eastwards and make troop deployments on the borders of Russia, effectively launching a new cold war.

In contrast to the earlier years, the last decade has highlighted the difficulties and challenges that the EU faces.

Economically, it has fallen far behind the US and China. At the same time, the neo-liberal agenda and the anti-crisis policies of the EU, imposed by German imperialism in particular, have increased inequality and unevenness within the EU itself. After the great recession, Germany and other, more competitive, countries unloaded the cost of the crisis onto the weaker European economies. The authorities of the Eurozone wantonly impoverished large parts of southern Europe in the name of budgetary stringency. They imposed savage austerity on Greece and other states, thus preventing their full recovery, and making them even more vulnerable once a new global recession hits. But Germany and France paid a heavy price for this by greatly increasing the centrifugal tendencies within the EU and the eurozone.

In military and geo-political terms, the EU remains a dwarf, unable to play a role which could establish it as a match for the US, China or Russia. The attempts of the European powers to overcome this are all half-hearted and often reflect their inner tensions rather than a clear policy. Whilst the EU tried to play a key role in the regime change in the Ukraine, it could not prevent the US dragging it into a new cold war, thus wrecking Germany's plans for closer economic links with Russia and, beyond it, China.

In revenge, Putin began to support awkward EU governments like Hungary and far right populist movements across the continent. At the same time, the aggressive "America-First" policy of the Trump administration not only sharpened the tensions between the EU and the US over trade, military, and international policy but also those within the EU, and even within the ruling classes of the main powers. The EU is thus becoming a potential arena within which outside powers could set some member states against the others. Italy, under its right wing populist government, has intervened against Macron in the internal affairs of France and struck a deal with China and its One Belt-One Road policy, strongly disapproved of by other EU members and the USA.

The so-called refugee crisis further highlighted the tensions. Immigration, racism, xenophobia have become the means to rally mass forces of disillusioned petit-bourgeois or even backward sections of the working class who have been impoverished or fear poverty. The rise of nationalism and of anti-EU sections of the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie reflect these growing tensions and inner contradictions. The EU is not a European super-state, but still a federation of national states, each with their competing interests.

No wonder, then, that this has led to the creation of anti-EU and right wing populist and racist forces across the continent who try to present themselves as an alternative to a German or Franco-German dominated EU which is about to fail. Clearly, once petty bourgeois forces enter the scene this crisis can and will take irrational forms, the most extreme probably in Britain, where the whole country is stuck with a Brexit, which the majority of the population and of both main classes do not actually want.

The sorcerer's apprentices

Whilst in the 1990s and the early 2000s, the European leaders presented the EU as a rapidly advancing project, bombarding the population with "great visions", recently those visions have faded and have been replaced by nightmares of national antagonisms, newly erected border fences and the danger that other exits might follow Brexit.

Only the French President, Emmanuel Macron, still regularly presents grand "plans for Europe" but these are deliberately vague when it comes to the question who will fund these reforms and how. Germany is clearly refusing to sign up and pay for them. The Commission's president, Jean-Claude Juncker, President Macron and the still central figure of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, are like sorcerer's apprentices who have called up spirits that they cannot control. By "making an example" of the Greeks, by forcing austerity on a series of countries, the so-called PIIGS, and by ignoring the popular will, as expressed in elections and referendums, they have roused the sleeping beasts of national chauvinism and racism.

The racists and right wing populists, like the Italian Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini or the leading French opposition leader Marine Le Pen, see the time is coming to impose their right wing agenda on the EU, an agenda on which little unites them apart from racism and xenophobia. Indeed, the next economic crisis, the question of who pays for the Italian debts, will question the unity of the different nationalists. Every day, the EU institutions show whose "child" they are, whose interests they serve and represent, certainly not those of the 512 million EU citizens, but the interests of capital.

For the workers of the continent, the pensioners, the students, the farmers and the unemployed, the internal market and the EU institutions have intensified competition, lowered wages, increased prices, ruined social benefits and are thus fully responsible for the shift to the right.

For the large corporations, the banks and the wealthy, the EU has paid off; profits have increased, markets and market participants have been exploited like never before. But even for capital, it has meant the subordination of the weaker units to the more competitive, or their collapse.

While economically big capital was able to strengthen itself significantly through the EU, the ambitions to become a world power have had to be left aside. Even against the crisis-ridden and weakening world hegemon, US imperialism, the EU cannot assert itself, despite Trump's insults and threats. Faltering steps towards a common foreign policy are daily halted by the national capitalist reality of the EU, so that the EU's "foreign policy" today is limited to diplomacy amongst its fractious members, whilst outwardly these different capitalist interests simply cannot appear united.

In 2019, most leading bourgeois politicians no longer have "visions" for the EU. Only defending a threatened status quo seems conceivable as a common goal. As a result of a decade of austerity and crisis politics, despite the achievements of the common internal market since 2001, capitalist contradictions have accumulated and opened a period of life or death crisis for the European Union.

The 2019 European elections will highlight these once again, revealing the different bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces that either have no answer to the EU's crisis or whose "answers" would tear it apart in a reactionary direction.

The conservative, liberal and Green parties are riven by contrasting commitments to "European" unity and national interests, by aiming to combine a capitalist agenda with empty promises of reform. They try to present themselves as a "democratic" bulwark against the right while building their own policy on the undemocratic institutions of the EU.

The right, which already made massive gains in the 2014 EU elections, represents the clearest sign of bourgeois decay and disintegration. Various petty bourgeois forces, and sectors of big capital too, present nationalism, chauvinism and racism as the main answers to the mounting imperialist crisis. The retreat to the national market, state and a "nativist" or "identitarian" conception of "the people", fuel an open and aggressive form of nationalism. But each ruling class, whatever its international (imperialist) interests, has to resort to nationalism in order to "unite" the nation for its own interest. Even the fascist groups are coming out of their holes strengthened, ready to carry out any dirty violence against the workers, migrants and oppressed strata, when the crisis deepens.

In this period, only the working class and the oppressed can preserve and expand the unity of working people across the continent against the racists and those who deliberately sow division and future conflicts.

To do this it needs an internationally co-ordinated policy and programme of action against the ongoing attacks and to present a working class answer to the European crisis. The official leaders of the workers' movement shy away from this and even coquet with nationalism and populism. In the past they failed to organise and generalise defence against the austerity packages, yielding instead to the competitive "needs" of national capital and to "social partnership". Before the EU elections in 2019, we can observe that the social democratic and labour parties oscillate between a fake form of European wide social reformism and a shift to nationalist adaptation. The "Left Parties" have split between left reformism and left-populism

This failure is not challenged by the "radical", socialist, communist left; on the contrary, some try to support the break-up of the EU from the left (Lexit), as with the "Brexit". Nor is it answered by the cosmopolitan pan-European populism of Yanis Varoufakis. What is completely missing is a perspective of the European class struggle, how the EU can be fought by means of class struggle and what a Europe without EU, capitalism and the swing to the right-wing could look like.

The nature of the EU and the roots of the current crisis

The EU faces a historic crisis. Great Britain has opted to leave the EU (Brexit), even though this might still be postponed. Brexit would not only mean the EU losing its third largest economy and a nuclear power but is likely to also devastate the UK's own remaining industries, especially with an economic slowdown and new recession looming on the horizon.

The global economic crisis of 2007/2008 and the "debt crisis" of 2010/11, intensified and aggravated the capitalist contradictions in the EU. With massive financial resources, the European System of Financial Supervision, ESFS, and the European Stability Mechanism, ESM, were set up to keep banks, financial institutions and the stock markets going. This led to an increase in national state debt and the imposition of austerity on large parts of Europe.

The neo-liberal dogma of saving and cutting was imposed on the budgets of the different states, the so-called "black zero" (a balance between expenditure and revenue) became the main goal of the EU institutions. The economically weaker states of the EU, whose economies had mostly expanded through new debt, were thus ruined economically, while the economically stronger states remained relatively stable or were able to strengthen themselves further.

German industrial capital was able to extend its supremacy within the EU, its production chains and market power were consolidated and competition from other EU states was weakened. In particular, it was able to expand its market power in sectors such as mechanical engineering, automobiles, electronics, chemicals and energy, while competition from France, Great Britain and Italy fell back.

The block economically linked to Germany, that is, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, and, in part, Scandinavia and Benelux, were able to overcome the crisis in the sphere of industrial production more quickly and plants were even expanded in Eastern Europe. In Southern Europe, but also in France and Great Britain, the industrial monopolies came under strain. Because of Brexit, foreign investors began to relocate production for the European market within the EU 27, with potentially massive effects on the local labour market.

Thus, the crisis led both to a further concentration of capital and to a neoliberal offensive on the public sector in terms of both employment and services, above all at the expense of the working class and the wage-dependent middle strata. These results of the crisis were no "coincidence", but pre-programmed by the common internal market and currency area. Alongside the credit programmes for the banks, stock exchanges and government bonds, a European debt brake was introduced, as were various mechanisms for deepening neoliberal policies on the continent, be it in the fight against unionisation, collective bargaining, rights, or the further dismantling of labour protections and pension rights.

While such policies continue to be imposed on the backs of wage earners and southern European economies, there have also been many cracks within the bourgeois classes and their affiliated petty bourgeois strata, which are also part of the EU imperialist project. The measures imposed, however, could not offset the roots of the global capitalist crisis, which led to the financial crisis and recession. Global capital is still haunted by over-accumulation of capital and declining rates of profit. Indeed, the policies of the US and the EU, the rise of China as an imperialist power as well as expanding semi-colonial economies (most importantly India), all mean that the problems of over-accumulation will be even more sharply posed in the next recession. The financial bubble is, if anything, greater than before 2008 and the industrial sector has not seen the necessary destruction of real capital. At the same time, the reserves to counter the next recession are more limited, with already low interest rates and massive debts in both state and private sectors.

Finally, the chances for a coordinated response by the big powers, as in 2009/10, are slim. The next recession will break out against the background of sharpened struggle for the re-division of the world. The big capitalist powers, whilst they will continue to aim to prevent a breakdown of world trade and commerce, will at the same time aim to force the cost of the recession onto their competitors.

Against this background, not only the EU, but also the different national economies will come under massive strain. The EU and the national governments themselves will be faced with the choice of a united response to their US and Chinese competitors or forcing the cost of the crises onto the weaker semi-colonial, or even imperialist, economies. Even German-French relations, already strained, will be put to the test.

The character of the European Union as a block of nation states rather than a federal state, will make itself felt. This is reflected in the fact that little "European consciousness" has developed amongst the bourgeoisie. The large capitals and finance houses are still dominated by the monopolies rooted in the dominant countries. "European" capital is actually German, French, Italian or other capital, still rooted in the respective national economies.

The capital formations of the weaker capitalist states, primarily eastern and southern Europe, are subject to the dominant imperialist capitals, which have expanded and intensified during the crisis. Parts of the British and Italian bourgeoisie are now looking for ways out on a national scale. Italy wants to reassert its status as an imperialist power, but is under pressure from its creditors. The constant competition with German imperialism has not led to a "convergence", let alone a weakening of the inner tensions, as French imperialism certainly hoped. On the contrary, just the opposite has happened; in capitalism, the strongest

market participant prevails and economic disparities are reproduced and even enforced.

The coming economic crisis will put the EU and the Eurozone to the test. With regard to the project of unifying Europe, there are several possible scenarios. If the EU falls apart into competing blocs, each with "its" special economic zones, the Franco-German leadership would certainly have been broken. On the other hand, a small "core Europe" block around Germany, or even Germany-France, would still dominate large parts of Europe economically, albeit in a different form. In the worst case, the EU could implode into numerous "independent" states, severing the economic ties already created and leading to the outright decay of the productive forces and thereby threatening a form of Balkanisation of the whole continent.

Finally, even a form of unification under Franco-German leadership cannot be completely ruled out but it could only mean a full-scale political subordination of the other EU states, in particular the economically weaker ones. It could only come about by economic force and political coercion and would, therefore, be a "unification" which would, sooner or later, lead to tensions, conflict and break-ups.

All this demonstrates that, whilst the European economy and social life have become more integrated, allowing movement of people across the continent and, to a certain degree, reducing national narrow mindedness as a consequence, especially amongst the young and those working in services and industries organised on an international scale, the capitalist classes have proved unable to unify the continent, since this would also require overcoming its uneven development, raising the social and economic standards to the highest level. This is impossible on a capitalist basis, just as it is impossible for the imperialist bourgeoisies from Germany, France and the weaker powers to organically develop the continent. For them, the unification of Europe only makes sense, if it is based on the dominance of their capital, on the continuation of exploiting semi-colonial areas via integration into their production and marketing systems. Whilst the German and French ruling classes may be able to agree to divide the weaker parts of the continent between themselves, both capitalist classes, both imperialist states, aspire to be the dominant part in this relationship; a contradiction that cannot be overcome on the basis of a capitalist system.

In addition, the EU's main competitors are already trying to take advantage of this crisis and to intervene in it. The US under Trump aims to coerce and even break up the EU into a number of individual trading and industrial "partners". China aims to get access to the EU and use the importance of its market for European capital in its struggle with the US. Russia also aims to intervene, even though with the narrower aim to overcome economic sanctions and a political isolation imposed by the US and some EU states. Even weaker imperialist powers, outside the EU, seek access to its markets. Finally, not only these states, but also some sections of the global right, for example, the Alt-Right from the US, try to meddle in Europe's crisis.

The current tensions clearly express themselves in the EU not moving forward on a number of fronts. Its structure and constitution not only make a mockery of even bourgeois forms of democracy, but leaving decisive powers with the national governments has also led to internal blockages, the delay of "reform projects" and a series of half-hearted decisions. The supposed "solutions" to these problems have themselves led to a scrapping of democratic controls, most notably in the sphere of finance and economy, or to "exceptions" from EU regulations, which reflect the bargaining powers of different states.

The bigger the crisis of the institution, the lower its popular legitimacy, the more this "encourages" a reactionary anti-Europeanism from the populist, or even fascist, right. The Salvinis, Orbans, Straches of the world, whilst they are all supporters of their national capital and of foreign investors' interests, exploit the real anti-working class and anti-social policies of the EU or the big powers from an arch-reactionary, nationalist and racist standpoint.

On the other hand, the liberal, Green, pro-European conservatives, and the majority of the social-democracy and the trade unions, present the current EU and its reform as an ultimate achievement. They brand everybody who rejects the EU as neo-liberal, undemocratic, racist or imperialist and as "anti-European".

Both of these camps try to deceive the masses for their own purposes but, for the European capitalist classes, the decisive moment is approaching. They need a "reform" of the EU to overcome its inner blockages to set up a political and military unification from above and to make the EU a real competitor with the US or China. Or they will have to opt for another strategy.

One could be a de facto subordinate "partnership" with one of the stronger powers, playing the role of a "junior partner" in world politics, if the EU continues to stagnate. Clearly, there could be a "privileged partnership" with the US, just as there could be close ties with an expanding China or closer collaboration with Japan. At the same time, the continued crisis will also give rise to "blocks" within the EU, be that around a dominant European power, like Germany, or other imperialists, like the US.

There is nothing certain, apart from the fact that things cannot drag on as before for much longer. Europe has already entered a period of deep crisis, and this will continue and sharpen.

The rise of the right

In the last decade, Europe has seen a series of impressive social and political struggles.

The Greek workers and youth rose against the austerity programmes, ousted the governments of Pasok and Nea Dimokratia, organised dozens of general strikes, brought Syriza to power and were willing to defy the austerity imposed by the EU and the IMF. Similar struggles, albeit on a less developed scale, arose in countries like Spain and Portugal. In France, the workers' and student movements forced concessions and retreats from both the right wing President, Nicolas Sarkozy, and the Socialist Party President, François Hollande, on some of their "reforms".

In 2015/16, when millions of refugees were temporarily able to overcome the racist and militarised border regimes and enter fortress Europe, millions of supporters welcomed them.

But the historic struggles in Greece and the antiracist wave of solidarity with refugees were defeated.

Beyond the EU's borders, the defeat of the Arab Spring led not only to the refugee crisis in Europe but compounded the feeling that the hopes of the 2010-11 wave of resistance had been dashed.

It was these defeats, not just the crisis of the European Union, which gave rise to the right, the mustering of openly racist, Islamophobic and chauvinist forces in the bourgeois camp and mass reactionary mobilisations in all countries. Right wing parties became mass forces in society, both on the streets and in the parliaments.

The right-wing populist, nationalist and racist parties were already big winners in the 2014 European elections and the same can be expected for 2019. They present themselves vis-à-vis the EU as the great defenders of the "nation", who finally want to "clean up" the bureaucracy in Brussels, who want to end "foreign rule". They present the EU as a project against national interests. The "Brexit" campaign in 2016 best summed up the promises of this bourgeois-national camp, when Boris Johnson promised that all the money that flows to Brussels would go to the British health system, the NHS, after Brexit.

Such demagoguery has become a simple, but effective, instrument for right-wingers of all sorts to rally support against the EU. At the heart of this are "classic" nationalism and racism. The problem is not capitalism, but "foreigners". Sometimes, the EU is even presented as the work of an international conspiracy against the "people", in which the dark powers of "cosmopolitanism" are at work for capital. Here, in addition to the

predominant islamophobia, the ugly monster of antisemitism begins to rear its ugly head. In this way, a number of them combine racism either with a neoliberal agenda (like the FPÖ, Fidesz, the Lega or the majority of the German AfD) or with a nationalist ?anticapitalism?, Islamophobia and antisemitism and including all forms of hybrid combinations.

In elections and in other mass campaigns these right-wing populists are always open to withdrawing from the EU or promise to achieve a "restoration" of national sovereignty, be it in financial policy or the border regime. As is usually the case with populist demagogues, however, this does not necessarily have anything to do with their actions if they do enter government. Thus Viktor Orban, defender of Christian Hungarian civilisation against George Soros funded higher education and human rights institutions, is happy enough to see "his" Hungarian workers super-exploited by German industrial capital, with the aid of a "slave Law" which allows up to 400 unpaid overtime hours per year, thus hoping to attract more investment from German imperialism.

In Austria, the FPÖ has also quickly dropped its calls for a referendum on leaving the EU, since Austrian capitalism benefits from the subjugation of the Eastern European economies. Even the currently quite "stubborn" Italian populist government has put its "Ixit" plans aside for the time being. After all, a rescheduling of the horrendous national debt is to be negotiated with the EU first and, at the same time, the obligations agreed by the former "technocratic government" of Mario Monti (2010-2012) have to be met. Similarly, Marine Le Pen, the French RN leader, tried to appeal to the French bourgeois voters by toning down her demand to withdraw from the EU.

Many of these forces want a "new" capitalist deal with the EU. Salvini, the Italian minister of the interior and leader of the Lega, even suggested his country should be a new co-leader of Europe, in collaboration with Berlin, referring to the idea of a Rome-Berlin Axis; an unfortunate turn of phrase, or a dog whistle signal to far right supporters?

With their social-national promises and rhetoric, the right-wing populist parties have penetrated deeply into the electorate of the conservative "people's parties" as well as the social democratic or "socialist" parties of Europe. These successes in the working class, as well as the petty bourgeoisie, have brought these parties support between 15-25 percent in the polls. They have succeeded in absorbing the hostility towards the EU by presenting themselves as defenders of the "ordinary people" or even, like Trump in the US, by claiming to represent a (native) working class that has been abandoned by its traditional parties. That they can get away with this is due in no small measure to the fact that socialist and labour parties became agents of neoliberal reform and downplayed or abandoned their old socialist programmes and identification with the proletariat. To this must be added the trade unions' weakness when it came to fighting austerity imposed by national governments backed by the EU institutions. Meanwhile, deindustrialisation, of whole regions, replacement of secure with insecure jobs, led to the shrinkage of the organisations of the labour movement, even though the wage earning working class was far from disappearing.

With their successes, such parties also open the way for openly fascist forces; in many states there is close cooperation between them. Militant organisations are no longer uncommon. Violent attacks on migrants, refugees and leftists, even including murder, have become a reality. Taken together, the right wing populists, the racist movements and the fascist forces represent a real and immediate threat to the working class of the continent. This continues and even sharpens when they are in government. They combine racism with massive attacks on working class rights and the rights achieved by women, minorities, etc.

Many European governments and mainstream parties, including social democracy and sections of the left,

have accommodated to the rise of the right by adopting racist policies in governments and parliaments. The EU has de facto sealed off the Mediterranean and is policing it with military forces. All countries have introduced massive attacks on democratic rights and on the rights of migrant labour and refugees. Only super-exploited labourers or the highly skilled are 'welcomed'.

The adaptation to the right, however, is also result of the inner crisis and imperialist ambitions of the EU and its leading states themselves. Anti-muslim racism has become the dominant form of racism throughout Europe not only because it is a permanent part of the right wing agenda, but also because it justifies new 'anti-terror' laws, increased rights for the police, declarations of 'states of emergency' and the 'humanitarian' interventions in the Middle East or Africa.

The crisis of working class leadership

The rise of the right would have been impossible, without the defeats of the labour movement and antiracist and social forces. These defeats are themselves clearly a result of the treacherous policy of the leaders and apparatus of the labour movements in Europe.

Social democracy on the continent of its birth has long undergone a turn to the right. Under Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, they abandoned 'traditional' Keynesian social reforms and improvements and accepted the parameters of the neo-liberal agendas. This policy required them to make the reformist, social-democratic and Labour parties more independent from the trade unions and their working class base, from their social and historic ties to the labour movement. Whilst the reformist leaders, parliamentarians and apparatus have gone a long way to sever and break that link, most of them, in the end, have not succeeded in doing this.

An important exception, the biggest mass Communist Party in Europe, the Italian, albeit one of the most reformist, 'successfully' turned itself into a left bourgeois party, fusing with a section of Christian Democracy. It even governed Italian capitalism in the interest of the bourgeoisie and the EU, and thereby created the conditions for the rise of the Five Star Movement and the new right wing government.

However, in most of Europe, the social-democratic parties have maintained their links with the labour movement, which has also allowed the occasional demagogic and, ultimately, empty, social promises, as from Hollande and the PS or, more recently, from the Spanish PSOE. The rise of Jeremy Corbyn in the British Labour party and its mass recruitment of hundreds of thousands has also demonstrated, however, that, under certain conditions, the mainstream reformist, bourgeois workers' parties can even evolve to the left and become an attraction for workers and youth.

Most of the traditional reformist parties, however, remain wedded to mainstream bourgeois politics. At best, they advocate a 'social' and 'reformed' Europe, which should introduce an economic policy to stimulate investment, growth and employment, and fund investment in education, health, infrastructure and the environment. In short, they propose a 'New Deal' for Europe, which will increase capitalist unification based on a state intervention designed to create forms of 'European capital' and, at the same time, introduce some minimum rights for workers, youth, women and oppressed minorities.

In terms of foreign and international policy, they are for a strong united Europe, a European 'defence' and even a more 'active' foreign policy in order to secure 'democracy' and a 'global economy'. Their Europe, whilst it should concede some improvements for European workers, is effectively a social chauvinist and imperialist Europe, which 'regulates' migration, which defends its borders, builds up or defends its existing military and police forces or even demands their 'modernisation' in order to defend Europe against Trump and/or Putin.

Despite their supposed "Europeanism", however, the leaders of social democracy, just like "their" ruling classes, remain defenders of "their" national working class. During the great crisis, when the EU and the IMF put the Greek and southern European workers on rations, they backed their bourgeoisies and the EU commission. They may have criticised Germany's finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble for being a bit too hard, but they rejected any opposition to him and finally voted for the EU deals imposed on the Syriza government.

As the Corbyn movement shows, however, such parties can, nevertheless, move to the left under certain conditions and adopt a left reformist programme, promising even nationalisation and a whole range of social reforms. But, as even the Labour Party and Corbyn's left supporters demonstrate, they are not willing or prepared for a decisive break with the right wingers in their own parties even when they mount massive sabotage. What they would do in government can easily be imagined.

This is a consequence of their political strategy, not the character of their leaders. Their programme requires a parliamentary majority and in order to gain, or maintain, that, they not only need to keep the right wing "on board" but to assure the trade union leaders and the bourgeoisie itself that even a government led by the left reformists will not go "too far", will be prepared to make compromises. It assures the labour bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie that under their leadership, the movement will not break with the bourgeois state and the ruling class by revolutionary means. That is why the Corbyn leadership has conceded to the right on the question of party membership control over the MPs and obstructed a democratic decision on the Brexit policy, while abandoning support for free movement. It has even allowed prime minister Theresa May to regain the initiative.

Faced with the rightward shift in Europe and the deepening crisis, revolutionaries need to relate to the members and supporters of those parties, since they still represent the mass of the organised working class of the continent and they still lead and dominate the majority of the trade unions. No successful struggle against the current and coming attacks will be possible without winning those workers to action. Therefore, revolutionaries need to combine a relentless criticism of the policies, the programmes and the adaptations of these parties to the bourgeoisie with calling on them to mobilise against the national and European capitalists. This means to demand that they break with the bourgeoisie when in government, refuse any coalition with the parties of the ruling class. They should support the left in these parties in their struggle against the right and demand decisive action from them but, as the example of Labour or other parties demonstrates, they must not confuse this with accommodation to the programme and strategy of the left reformists. All support has to be highly critical and designed to gain the hearing of the working class supporters of these parties to win them to break with reformism as such and to win them to a revolutionary programme.

In many countries, the crisis of social democracy or the old "Communist", that is, Stalinist, parties has led to the creation of "left parties", parties with a left reformist programme. As the example of Syriza in government demonstrated, these parties are not qualitatively different from the mainstream reformist parties. They are neither willing nor prepared to break with the bourgeoisie and European capital when a revolutionary break is required.

Despite the crisis of European social democracy, however, these left parties have themselves been unable to win over the mass of the working class in most countries, outside Greece. One reason is, that ultimately, they do not offer a strategic, programmatic alternative to the programme of mainstream reformism. If the bigger reformist party "suddenly" moves to the left, the left reformists are difficult to differentiate. Secondly, such parties have consistently refused to challenge the leadership and hegemony of social democracy in the trade unions and workplace organisations and, as a result, often actually have weaker

organic links to the class.

Whilst social democratic parties themselves have, until now, generally adapted to the 'pro-European' sections of their ruling classes, the European left parties are divided on this.

An important section mimics the policy of social-democracy, albeit in a more left wing version. It calls for 'transforming' the EU into a social, democratic unity with welfarism, nationalisation of key sectors of the economy and a 'humanitarian' or 'peaceful' global policy. It rejects NATO and it also calls for 'disarmament', that is, a social-pacifist rather than an overtly social-chauvinist, policy.

However, as reformists, their strategy for change ultimately is a parliamentary one, trying to transform Europe via the existing, albeit democratised, institutions of the bourgeois states.

Whilst this wing of European left reformism is clearly socially tied to the working class and organically linked to it, forms of European left populism have also emerged, in both 'pro-EU' and 'anti-EU' forms.

On the one hand, there is the small Democracy in Europe Movement 2025, or DiEM25, around the former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis. Claiming 60,000 members from across the European Union, this sees the enemy as 'financialised' global capital. Its manifesto talks of rebuilding the EU democratically from below via a "radical" democratisation and 're-deploying existing institutions through a creative re-interpretation of existing treaties and charters', culminating in elections to a 'Constitutional Assembly'. It assembles an eclectic mix of utopian and reformist demands such as a universal basic income and participatory budgets. As the agency for achieving this, DiEM25 sees not the workers' movement but, rather, 'the people'. In effect, this 'people' turns out to be the academic middle classes.

On the other hand, a split in the European Left Party has led to the formation of a left-populist European alliance, called "Maintenant le Peuple" (Now the People) around La France insoumise/Parti de Gauche, the Spanish Podemos, the Portuguese Bloco de Esquerda, the Swedish Vänsterpartiet and the Danish Enhedslisten. Unlike the European Left Party, they campaign for an open rejection of the EU from the "left" and for leaving the EU. They believe that a reform programme could only be implemented outside the EU and with a return to 'national sovereignty'.

"Now the People" tries to outdo the right in its rejection of the EU, even if the alternative, back to the nation state, is the same. Here, the illusion is peddled that there are better fighting perspectives in the nation state, that the workers' movement and the middle classes could get "more" out of that than from the bureaucratic monster, the EU. In this sense, there are certain overlaps of these left-wing populists with their opponents, the right-wing populists. This adaptation to the populist trend of the bourgeois class is not surprising, since both Mélenchon and the European Left Party represent bourgeois politics in the workers' movement and consider themselves to be the "reasonable" alternative for the respective national capitals.

Trade unions

It is not only the reformist parties, old and new, and the left populists who have failed to give a fighting answer to the crisis. The trade unions have also failed to provide leadership for defensive struggles or to unite them on a European level. The trade union and workplace organisations, such as the European Works Councils, remain weak and are closely tied to a system of class collaboration, modelled more or less on the German system of co-determination. In most countries, the trade unions have shrunk and been reduced to certain sectors of industry or the public sector. Smaller parts of the national economies are covered by bargaining agreements.

In large sections of Europe, unemployment, *précarité*, the scrapping or commercialisation of public services, health, education etc. have risen, hitting women, youth and migrants particularly hard. Whole sections of eastern and southern Europe have already been impoverished.

It is a bureaucratic, reformist utopia to think that all this can be stopped just by everybody resisting within their own country. Successful resistance cannot be achieved without a coordinated European fight-back but the unorganised cannot become organised on the basis of social partnership and bureaucratic routine.

The reformist and bureaucratic leaderships and the whole bureaucratic apparatus have long tied their fate to a policy of systematic class collaboration in the workplaces and social partnership in society generally. The large unions have agreed to productivity agreements with the large monopolies, defending the supposedly common interests of their companies or even of the workers from their country against the workers of others within a multinational. Most of the bargaining and trade union struggles are conducted on a national basis, despite the fact that within the EU and globally, they increasingly face globalised branches of the economy.

This national centred character of the trade unions is expressed either in a social chauvinist reformist policy; support for restrictions on immigration, putting our workers first and so on or, even worse, it can become a way into the workplaces and, sometimes, the trade unions, for right wing forces presenting themselves as defenders of the national worker. However, the crisis of the trade unions can be overcome, if we generalise and build up what is positive about the struggles of the last year and wage a systematic fight for an internationalist class struggle policy in the unions.

We should recall at this point that there have already been European struggles that repulsed neoliberal reforms, as the struggles of the transport and port workers against the so-called "Bolkestein" guidelines showed. There, the working class stood up against the EU institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg and were able to repulse the attacks at first. In some ports there are wage contracts that apply beyond national borders.

Every day, hundreds of millions work on this continent, it is they who maintain the largest single market, a large public service and run large scale industry, not the neoliberal bureaucrats from Brussels or the chairmen of the large production chains. This opens enormous possibilities for working class action. The example of Audi Hungary demonstrates these. After a week of strike in Győr, other factories of the VW/Audi company were also affected. In Bratislava and Leipzig there were production losses. The workers of Győr won their demand, a 16 percent wage increase, despite the introduction of the slave laws in Hungary. Such industrial action could contribute and, indeed, will be required, to fend off mass layoffs in the next crisis.

All this shows the way forward, a way forward that the dynamics of the class struggle itself point to. The workers' movement, however, suffers from a lack of internationalism and revolutionary direction. This can also be observed in the outburst and mass mobilisations against ongoing attacks. If the working class and its organisations are not able or willing to give leadership to the struggles in the workplace and on the streets, other classes, other forces, will. We could see this with movements like the Indignados in Spain, which gave rise to Podemos, or in an even more worrying version with the gilets jaunes in France, which have taken a populist, petit bourgeois character, where right wing and left wing populists contend for leadership.

We can also see it in the anti-racist struggles, in the environmental movement or in the rise of left wing nationalist movements such as in Catalonia. In these cases, Green parties, nationalist forces or NGOs take the lead and influence the movements, if the working class does not engage in a policy to actively oppose all forms of oppression. In eastern Europe, Ireland and Spain, the massive attacks on women's rights have led hundreds of thousands to go onto the streets. They have rallied women, but generally under the leadership of liberal bourgeois or reformist forces, limiting the scope of their actions.

New revolutionary parties and international

Despite the rise of the far right and the forces of reaction generally, there is no shortage of struggles by people resisting austerity and the destruction of welfare, education, public services, the scapegoating of immigrants and the slide towards climate catastrophe. The existential crisis in the EU, the onslaught on democratic rights in member states, has propelled workers, young people and oppressed minorities time and time again onto the streets in hundreds of thousands, indeed millions. The next recession and the sharpening of inter-imperialist rivalry both economic and military will intensify this. This presents a historic challenge to Europe's labour movements. This is not an era in which major reforms can be conceded by capitalism except at the point of frankly revolutionary struggles.

The present leaderships of the unions and reformist parties, right and left, and also the 'left' populists, have proved beyond a doubt their incapacity to meet this challenge. A Europe-wide revolutionary alternative needs to be built, new mass revolutionary parties united in an International, which rallies the fighting forces from the unions, the workplaces, from the social movements. Of course, such a process cannot take place apart from seeking to win over the anti-capitalist and internationalist militants within existing reformist parties. Such a party needs unity in action and therefore a programme of action, linking the struggles of the day with the struggle for the Socialist United States of Europe.

The building of new parties and a new, Fifth, International, is an urgent question of the day, since we need a political force to unite divergent struggles, to fight for a clear political programme and direction, to challenge reformism, left populism, petit-bourgeois politics and the hold of the bureaucracy over the trade unions.

We need a revolutionary organisation which advocates a programme of class struggle in all the rising movements, in all forms of resistance against the attacks by the bosses, against attacks on democratic rights, against racism, war, militarism and climate change. Such a programme needs to be brought into the mass organisations of the working class and in particular into the trade unions and workplaces.

A key part of such a policy needs to be the call for action conferences of the workers' movement and the oppressed at all levels; in the work places, in the unions, at the universities and schools, in the localities, on local, regional, national and Europe-wide levels. Such conferences need to work out and agree on a course of international action. They need to make decisions that lead to common mass action as did the anti-war mobilisations of the European Social Forum at the beginning of the century.

The need for a Europe-wide struggle against the growth of the right-wing, against the austerity regimes and militarisation must be carried into the organs of the workers' movement, that is the prospect for 2019, regardless of the results in the EU election. The right is further on the offensive and the Left and the working class must take the lead in mounting resistance. Therefore, we call on all revolutionaries and anti-capitalists to unite in this task and present this programme as a contribution to the necessary discussion forge a resistance that can not only defeat the right's offensive but go on to the socialist transformation of Europe.

Against unemployment and precarious jobs.

? For mass strikes, up to and including general strikes, to prevent employers and governments making us pay the price of their crisis through mass sackings.

? Against all casualisation and sub-contracting of full time jobs. No part-time work for reduced pay!

? For a massive emergency programme of socially useful public works to provide full employment, develop the economic and social infrastructure and restore the environment. Working class communities, faced with acute shortages of socially owned housing, dilapidated housing stock, run-down schools, shortages of nurseries, kindergartens, surgeries and clinics, should conduct an audit of social need.

? These public works should be part of a democratically developed plan of production, run under workers' control. Plans should be drawn up by the workers in these sectors, along with workers from the construction, materials and supply industries. Democratically elected trade union representatives should take charge of enrolling the unemployed or school leavers on the programme and collectively agree a living wage. The bill should be delivered to the bankers and corporations that caused the crisis. The programme must be financed by massively raising taxes on the rich (on their incomes and on their accumulated wealth).

? In workplaces where bosses try to sack part of the workforce, we should demand a sliding scale of hours: the work should be divided between all those available to do it, with no loss of pay.

Employers are using the crisis to slash real wages and to increase precarious working conditions. Millions have already been forced into poverty and insecurity, undermining our collective strength. More will be threatened by this in the next crisis. We demand:

? A minimum wage set by each national labour movement at a level that can protect workers from poverty, above the European decency threshold

? A sliding scale of wages to protect pay against inflation.

? The unions must launch a struggle across borders to level up lower wage levels in some countries to the higher level, this is the working class answer to the 'race to the bottom': a race to the top based on international solidarity, not attempts to drive out 'foreign' workers or privilege citizens over migrants.

? For a 35-hour, 5 day working week now, as a legally enforced maximum with no loss of pay

? Against all compulsory work-for-dole schemes for the unemployed, or schemes that pay lower wages and have less legal protection for workers. Real jobs for the unemployed, not poverty labour schemes.

? All contract, temporary and training scheme workers to be given permanent contracts at full trade union rates.

? For nationalisation of failing companies, not state bailouts of failed bosses. Instead of the trillion-euro bank bailouts and company bailouts, the banks, the major corporations, and all companies declaring redundancies should be nationalised without compensation and under workers' control.

From winning today's women's struggle to complete liberation

Patriarchy, the dominance of males in political, economic and family and private life makes men, including the men of the exploited classes, beneficiaries and agents of women's oppression. However, male sexism is at the same time inimical to the interests of working class men, obstructing the everyday class struggle and the goal of socialism. There can be no socialism without women's liberation.

At the same time, only the abolition of capitalism, the last form of class society, will finally liberate women. This combined task is that of the whole working class and all those who rally to its cause from other classes. That is why we cannot tolerate the exclusion of women, including by passivity and neglect, from any aspect of the class struggle. Today, we, women and men, must and can mobilise millions in the struggle against the many expressions of female oppression, in the state, the economy and in the organisations of the working class.

Over the last ten years, governments have given huge handouts to the bankers and then carried through massive cuts in social services. These hit working class women doubly hard: first, as the majority of the workforce in the care and education of young children, the sick and the elderly; and then in the family home, where they have to shoulder the unpaid work of looking after those whose care the state has abandoned.

Millions of women in Europe are still denied the opportunity of well-paid, waged work. Those who are able to enter the world of work are often forced into the lowest paid occupations and continue to suffer

discrimination in pay levels, often earning substantially less than men for doing exactly the same job. Interruption of work by pregnancies and the early years of childcare are used to reduce women's wages, salaries and pension levels.

In every period of recession and crisis, poverty and the despair of mass unemployment increase the physical and mental abuse of women, including rape and domestic violence. Here, too, the resources for dealing with this, like women's refuges, have fallen victim to austerity. But, as oppression has grown, so too has women's resistance. The MeToo# movement in the US spread worldwide, including to Europe, bringing into the spotlight the ubiquitous scale of sexual harassment women suffer in the workplace and in public life. Important sections of the supposedly revolutionary left have not proved immune from this, for all their proclamations of support for feminism and women's liberation.

The economic and social crisis of our times, means working class women face not just a worsening of their living conditions but also a propaganda offensive of the right arguing that a 'woman's place is in the home'. This goes hand in hand with moves to restrict women's reproductive rights. In some European Union states, like Poland, where the church still has enormous influence over education and healthcare, it is difficult for the vast majority of women to obtain an abortion.

However the landslide victory of the Irish referendum in May 2018, and Poland's 'Black Monday' women's mobilisations in 2016, show that mass campaigning can resist and even overcome the entrenched power of the churches and social reactionaries.

The election of Donald Trump, a notorious misogynist and abuser, to the White House and Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of Brazil have encouraged reactionaries across Europe. However, the wave of mass resistance in North and South America has encouraged the idea and practice of simultaneous global mobilisations like the International Women's Strike.

? Defend a woman's right to work

? Defend the social services against cuts in nurseries and childcare and the closure of refuges against rape and domestic violence. Demand adequate support for carers of the elderly and infirm in the home.

? Renationalise privatised services, including free childcare, access to health and education for all, run under control of working women!

? Demand full pay equality between men and women, with increased maternity (or paternity) leave with no loss of wage increments or pension entitlement

? In every European country, we demand a woman's access to free birth control and abortion on demand without restrictions. The separation of these vital services from the church remains an essential democratic demand in many countries, as does collective control over them by their users and workers.

? Defend, restore and expand the social services, no return to the isolation of the home, for a mass mobilisation under the slogan, women will not pay for capitalism's social crisis.

? A radical transformation of the way the police and judicial system treat rape and domestic violence survivors, so that it is not the sufferers who are on trial but the abusers.

? A campaign to halt the incitement of violence and discrimination against women; and public 'shaming' whether this comes from the millionaire press or social and online media.

? Extend the practice of women's caucuses in the trade unions and parties of the working class, increasing women's equal participation in leadership, combating sexist practices and abuse.

? Our goal, inseparable from the overthrow of capitalist rule, is for the full socialisation of childcare and domestic labour, full equality of the sexes and the withering away of even the last traces of patriarchy.

Youth taking the lead in struggles

The root of the oppression of youth lies in the family. In the bourgeois family, the child is almost entirely without rights and subject to the dictatorship of the parent, a situation that poisons the relations between children and parents. Every young person who wants to establish his or her own personal and sexual relationships, pursue their own interests and shape their own lives at some point has to challenge parental, school and police authority.

As a result, young people are in the forefront of struggles for freedom and the opening decades of the new millennium have seen many striking examples of this. They formed the mass base of the anticapitalist and anti-war movements in the early 2000s. In 2010-11, the suicide of a young Tunisian street vendor, protesting against police extortion and harassment, sparked a revolution that drove out the country's authoritarian leader and launched the Arab Spring in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. Using social media, youth organised a wave of street mobilisations and square occupations that spread to Europe and North America.

Cairo's Tahrir Square occupation was copied by those of the Indignados in Spain and in Italy, Portugal and in Greece from 2010 to 2015. In 2010, cuts in education as part of neo-liberal capitalist austerity motivated university and college students to besiege parliament in the UK. Alongside repeated general strikes, young people were in the forefront of resisting the austerity packages that at their peak meant youth unemployment approached 50 percent.

In 2018, it was young Palestinians who organised the March of Return in Gaza during which 200 unarmed demonstrators have been shot by Israeli snipers. In 2019, school strikes initiated by the 16-year old Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg, triggered mass direct action protests in Germany and Britain, launching a movement that is spreading worldwide. 2019 also witnessed mass demonstrations by young people in Algeria that brought the 20-year rule of Abdelaziz Bouteflika to an end, followed by a mass popular uprising in Sudan in which young people, women and trade unionists united to demand the end of the entire military-bureaucratic regime.

Nearly a decade on, despite the halting recovery from the great recession, unemployment for those aged 15-24 remains high; in Greece, 39.9 percent, in Italy 32.2 percent, in Spain 34.4 percent and in France 20.8 percent.

A majority of those in work are in highly precarious jobs, on fixed term, zero hours/part time contracts and have far weaker legal protection than other workers. Firms like Amazon, Deliveroo and Uber, super-exploit young workers. Government training schemes pay poverty wages and have no guaranteed job at the end of them. On the street, young people are picked on and harassed by the police.

In schools, the inequalities and power structures of society are reproduced and justified since 'training for life', that is, life under capitalism, means denying young people any right to participate in decision making and subjecting them to arbitrary discipline.

We oppose all religious or private control of schooling and fight for secular, state-funded education. Curricula should be established and schools managed democratically by the teachers, parents and students themselves. Young women should have access to birth control and the right to terminate unwanted pregnancies. We need youth sports and entertainment centres and access to decent housing, funded by the state all under the democratic control of those who use them and the workers employed in them.

We are fighting for:

? Free education for all, living grants, abolition of student debt for local and international students.

- ? An end to all segregation and discrimination in school based on sex, race or religion. No to religious schools, for education not indoctrination.
- ? The nationalisation of all private schools without compensation, kick out the profiteers.
- ? Democratisation of the schools, colleges and universities, under committees of students, parents, teachers and ancillary workers? to plan education and administration. For students? unions in schools and colleges.
- ? For social centres for young people under the democratic control of those who use and work in them.
- ? For a living allowance, food and accommodation for all students.

The democratic rights of young people have to be increased with the rights to vote at 16 or earlier if they are employed, those old enough to work are old enough to vote! No to compulsory conscription of young people into capitalist armies, but training in the use of arms should be available to all.

We fight for:

- ? Zero tolerance of child abuse, sexual or physical, tough penalties for beatings and cruelty. Abolish laws against consensual sex between young people.
- ? Sex education combating, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia.
- ? Full citizenship rights at 16, including the right to vote
- ? For the right to work. Provide jobs by cutting the hours with no loss of pay.

Wherever reformist parliamentarians or trade union officials find it necessary to organise young people, in youth wings or movements, they always try to stop them voicing their own demands. Because of the specific condition of young people and the character of their oppression, a genuinely revolutionary party will never treat the youth organisation as a subordinate, junior department under the tutelage of adult ?leaders?. Instead, it must champion the organisational and political independence of the youth movement, able to make their own decisions, determine their own activity, debate and decide upon their own policies and, if need be, to criticise the ?adult? party, which in turn has the right to criticise them. Only thus can young people learn from both from their mistakes and their successes.

Fight for the environment, resources, food and climate!

Capitalism itself is responsible for creating the conditions that led to the impending environmental catastrophe. The revival of acute inter-imperialist rivalry, heightened competition and trade wars, makes the capacity of the present capitalist states to address, let alone solve, the danger of global climate catastrophe, virtually nil. To save our natural environment from pollution, floods, wildfires, desertification, famines and the loss of biodiversity, the scourge of profit and the anarchy of the market have to be removed from production. In their place, sustainable production of power supply, food, raw materials, transport, has to be planned at a local, regional and international scale.

Without rapid and determined action, climate change will threaten the reproduction of mankind itself. Whilst the European ruling classes present themselves as ?green? and are outraged about Trump and his opting out of the ?Paris Climate Accords?, they are themselves just aiming to make others pay for their failure to deal with the current crisis. They do not defend the environment and the future of humanity, but the profits of large scale industries, the monopolies in the car, oil, transport and energy sector. Whilst they pay lip-service to the semi-colonial countries threatened with disaster, floods, deserts and water-shortages, they actually want to load the cost of climate change onto the poor, the exploited countries, the peasantry and the working class.

At the same time, millions of people are beginning to realise that we need a system change in order to stop climate change. However, the green, bourgeois, petit bourgeois and reformist leaders of the movement fail

to understand the character of the system, capitalism, and therefore the means to overthrow it, the class struggle. In order to address the environmental question, immediate, decisive action is needed on a national, European and global level.

- Set an early date for phasing out of nuclear and fossil fuel in energy production; for massive investment in renewable energies in order to solve the problems of storage of energy!
- For massive investment in a public transport system on a European level in order to replace the individual car and at the same time maintain and improve transport systems in the communes, in town and countryside, at a national and European level!
- Nationalise without compensation all the big monopolies in the energy and transport sector. Nationalisation of research and its redirection to address the needs of the masses and a sustainable environment!
- A plan of investment in environmental repair, energy saving in housing and production.
- Make the capitalists pay for environmental change! No "green" mass taxes, for a massive taxation of profits and wealth!

We demand trade union, civil and democratic rights

The War on Terrorism has been used as a pretext to attack our democratic rights, including extended detention and questioning of suspects without recourse to lawyers or court appearances. Police surveillance of the population, under the pretext of security, has been increased enormously with all forms of communication now open to spying. The rights to freedom of assembly and demonstration have been narrowed and police forces have used new laws to harass protesting workers and immigrant populations.

- ? Repeal of all the so-called anti-terror laws and police powers to spy on citizens? legal activities
- ? No detention without trial

In most European countries, trade unions suffer heavy legal shackles that hamper workers' resistance. Ponderous systems of balloting, cooling off periods or compulsory arbitration delay an immediate response to workplace closures or mass sackings. Political strikes, that is, strikes against government policy, are banned in most countries and in Italy and France there are threats to introduce bans on strikes in "essential services".

- ? End all laws restricting the right to strike and to organise. For the right to strike.
- ? Legally enforceable right to join a trade union: for immediate reinstatement and compensation for workers sacked for exercising this right.

The growth of mass unemployment and the failure to fight back leads to racist scapegoating of minorities and the growth of fascism.

Against the growth of the racist right and the fascists we fight for:

- ? An end to all restrictions on the right of workers to move across Europe in search of work. Against all immigration controls. Down with the Schengen Treaty, down with Frontex and the EU-policing of the Mediterranean, scrap the deal with Turkey to block refugees coming to Europe. For full citizenship rights, including equal rights to work, equal right to stay, equal access to social benefits, healthcare, education, full political rights, including the right to vote. For open borders: for the unrestricted right of political asylum and the search for employment.

- ? Mass action to stop fascists and racist populists spreading hate propaganda, and to confront and stop violent attacks on migrants and ethnic minority communities. The working class movement should support communities who defend themselves against pogroms and racist and fascist violence, and should take the lead in organising a workers' and popular antifascist defence force. We cannot rely on the police forces

and judicial systems of the capitalist state to do this because their number one priority is to defend the class interests of their masters.

? Although today fascism is growing by posing as a ?respectable? democratic party, in many countries it still resorts to street marches and violent provocations to intimidate migrants, Roma, Muslims, national minorities, black and Asian communities and Jews. These are just preparatory manoeuvres to show the capitalist class its capacity for civil war against the organised working class, its usefulness in breaking strikes and intimidating the left, just as Mussolini?s Blackshirts and the Nazi SA did in the 1920s and 30s. Fascism?s ultimate aim is the pulverisation of the workers? movement. We must campaign for mass united working class action now to crush the fascist organisations before they are in a position to do this.

? At the same time we take to the masses; sacked workers, the youth without jobs, families without social housing, a message of struggle directed not against scapegoats but against the real authors of their deprivation, the capitalists. We answer the counter-revolutionary despair of racism and fascism with the revolutionary hope of the struggle for socialism.

? For equal rights in the use of languages: no compulsory official languages. Wherever possible, immigrant children should be able to use their mother tongue in schools as well as learning the language of the host country. Teaching in schools and universities and public services should be provided in the languages of people living in the local area. For massive recruitment of teachers and public service workers from an immigrant background and with appropriate language skills to make this possible.

? For the integration of migrant workers and their families into the labour movement, both trade unions and political parties, on the basis of equal rights and campaigning against their oppression and exploitation. For the creation of a common culture of struggle based on internationalism, working class independence and solidarity.

No to an imperialist super state. Bring all European forces back from Afghanistan and from Mali ? Dissolve Nato.

The ending of the hegemony of the United States as the world economic power, its determination not to tolerate any real challenges to its absolute military dominance by China and Russia, has led to increasing rivalry between America, the European Union, Russia and China. The workers of Europe, while opposing US led actions like the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, its limited interventions in Syria or its threats against Iran, must not be dragged into a European patriotism, to the project of building up a united European imperialist state, with its own army and its own project of dominating spheres of influence around the world.

The EU?s propaganda claims that such a new European superpower would be a more peaceful, democratic or more ?social? world power than its rivals. This is a total deception, and one that the Social Democratic, Labour, Left, and trade unions, have joined the bosses in spreading.

A European super state would be an imperialist power pursuing the European capitalists? plan for the redivision of the markets and resources of the world. Such a re-division may start as sharpened competition over trade and mutual accusations of ?protectionism? but the twentieth century showed how this ends up ? in immensely destructive world wars. We have to start our opposition to this frightful prospect now by opposing the creation of a European Union military force, even though it is as yet only in embryonic form. More real are the forces despatched to Afghanistan under the NATO umbrella and the various ?humanitarian forces? that have been set up for interventions in Africa.

The working class movement should oppose them all. But we should also oppose the expansion of ?our?

national military forces and campaign against recruitment of the young in schools, among those seeking education and training, full time jobs, or just to 'see the world'. In short, all those denied these objectives in everyday life under capitalism. We should call for the immediate withdrawal of all forces stationed overseas and all spending on the imperialist armed forces. We repeat the old socialist slogan which is still a guide to how to respond to calls to defend the capitalist fatherland; not a penny, not a person, for the defence of this system.

Transform the economy

The mountains of toxic debt accumulated by billionaires must not be redeemed by working class taxpayers. The companies engaged in production, distribution or the provision of useful services, whose owners have bankrupted them, must be 'saved' by being taken into state ownership with no compensation. Their accounts must be published and the conspiracy of business secrecy against workers and consumers revealed in full.

? No to the bank bailouts. No to bail-outs of the industrial monopolies based on rationalisation and closures. Take over all the banks without compensation and merge them into a single state bank. Instead of subsidies for business, we call for the expropriation without compensation of the large industries, communications systems and the media, large farms and retail outlets. Small savers? and workers? pension funds should be secured by state bonds or consolidation into a secure, living income via the state pension system.

? For a European-wide plan of production, based on a system of integrated plans at a national, regional and local level. All should be democratically drawn up and decided by workers and consumers, and implemented under workers? management of production and distribution.

? An end to business and bureaucratic secrecy. The banks kept their shady deals from us, ruining many of their customers and small savers, but then made us pay the price for bailing them out. Open the accounts and the computer records of the banks, the businesses, the state and EU bureaucrats to inspection by the workforce and the public.

A planned economy would systematically challenge inequalities across Europe, transferring resources and wealth to raise the level of countries in the East that have been left in underdevelopment over decades, undermining the soil from which nationalism and reaction can grow.

No to the Capitalist European Union! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

The working class has no fatherland. It is international and its class policy is internationalist or nothing. Therefore, the working class movement should oppose the European Union as an entity which attempts to create a new imperialist superstate, to strengthen German and French imperialism and their ability to exploit the world.

At the same time, we must reject the arguments of those 'anti-Europeans' who oppose the EU for xenophobic and nationalist reasons. These forces, and their social-chauvinist politics which echo in the trade unions and reformist parties, are a cul de sac for the working class and the oppressed. They aim to split our movement along national and racial lines and subordinate us to 'our' national bosses.

Although we fight to defend those few progressive gains that have arisen from the EU process (for instance the abolition of border controls within the EU), we are opposed root and branch to its structures and economic agenda.

We support the resistance struggle of peoples around the world against European occupation forces, for

example, in Afghanistan and Chad. The defeat of the EU troops in these countries would be a victory for the workers and popular masses of the world, a blow against imperialism. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all European troops and the closure of all European powers' military bases overseas.

? Down with the EU parliament, the EU commission, the European Court of Justice. Dismantle the European super state structures.

? No to the Lisbon agenda and Bologna process, no to all neo liberalism and the race to the bottom mentality of the European Union.

? For the election of a sovereign European Constituent Assembly by all those permanently resident in the EU over the age of 16 and from those countries who wish to join it. The ECJ and all other courts should be elected bodies.

Today we should fight for the following.

? An immediate end to austerity across the continent and a fight to take the power into the hands of governments of working people. The next oncoming capitalist crisis must be met not with austerity but with the socialisation of all firms declaring redundancies or attempting to go into bankruptcy.

? Common action against the rationalisation, plant closures and job losses planned by the big car and components factories across Europe, including Ford, Jaguar Land Rover and Michelin and others. Setting the goal of socialising the car, bus and commercial vehicle industry and beginning its transformation on an environmentally sound basis.

? Going beyond UK Labour's timid pledges to renationalise rail franchise holders as their contracts expire, or paying compensation to big shareholders and fighting for a socialised pan-European rail network.

? Socialise the giant electricity corporations; Enel, EDF, E.ON, Siemens whose workers can plan a massive shift away from fossil fuels and nuclear to renewables.

? Raise the wages, social welfare systems of the whole continent to the levels of the best examples and practice as the start of further improvement.

? Repeal the Lisbon Treaty and all neoliberal policies that obstruct the preservation and extension of public ownership of industries, transport, social services and utilities. Replace the 'Posted Workers Directive' and the European Court of Justice-Laval rulings not in order to exclude 'foreign' workers but to ensure they are employed on the same wages, access to social services, and union rights as workers in the host countries.

? The Euro needs to be put under control of a Europe-wide state banking system, controlled by the workers, in the process socialising HSBC, BNP Paribas, Deutsche Bank, Santander etc. This system would be an essential base for creating a Europe wide planning system whose goals would be:

(i) building social equality by raising the education, welfare, and employment levels plus overcoming the national and regional inequalities that plague the states of Europe. Ending the disparities between country and town.

(ii) combatting global warming and undertaking regeneration of the environment, devastated by capital's thoughtless plunder of nature.

(iii) To achieve this will require banking workers' control and inspection leading to democratic management by working people.

? Break down the external walls of Fortress Europe and the razor wire topped internal fences between states. Open the borders to refugees and those seeking work, full citizenship and social rights for those who wish to remain.

?The very organisations that we need to resist austerity and cuts today can become the instruments of our rule tomorrow. Joint committees and cross-sectoral co-ordinations of workers and youth in every town and

city can become powerful councils of workers? delegates, able to govern society as the soviets did in revolutionary Russia in 1917. The organised self-defence that the workers and youth need to mount to police repression and fascist attack can become the instrument for confronting and overcoming the resistance of the capitalist state.

? Only workers' governments based on the working class organisations can break up the capitalists' power and systematically take over their property and establish a socialist planned economy.

Workers' governments and the European revolution

A united class struggle in Europe or in major countries, will rapidly pose the question of political power, the question which class rules in a specific country or the continent as a whole. The current crisis of Europe cannot be solved on a national level. Every major question will raise the need for a transformation of the continent as a whole.

A socialist federation in Europe, the " Socialist United States of Europe", is the solution to the pressing problems facing future generations. If we want to fight the right shift, racism, nationalism and fascism, we need an internationalist and anti-capitalist alternative to the current EU.

Every major political crisis in the EU, its long term stagnation, and an oncoming economic crisis affect the working class of the entire continent as well as the small farmers and lower middle classes. The attacks from the capitalists and the bourgeois governments in turn generate major social resistance movements and point to the need for a united fight-back.

Of course, such struggles develop unevenly and pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situations will not arise simultaneously in all the countries. Therefore, the struggle for a socialist revolution in Europe has to go hand in hand with the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of workers' and peasants' governments wherever the possibility arises.

Just as the slogan for a United Socialist States of Europe has a transitional character, so has the call for workers' or workers and peasants' governments in every country. By such governments we do not mean ?left? social-democratic or labour governments, let alone ones in coalition with the open bourgeois parties, such as the Syriza-ANEL government in Greece. They have not really broken with the capitalist class and still operate within the straitjacket of the bourgeois state machine. We call on them to make that break. Under conditions of mass resistance to austerity and cuts in social welfare, or a new recession, they will be faced with a choice; whether to capitulate like Syriza or to take the road of becoming real workers' governments by mobilising the working class in its millions. Our aim must be to oblige them not to betray their working class supporters but to take the latter course.

In order to make such governments take real steps towards a socialist transformation, make them transitional governments towards the democratic rule of the working class, in other words the dictatorship of the proletariat, they need to break irrevocably with the bourgeois parties, they need to take real steps to expropriate large scale capital under workers' control and establish a workers' plan to reorganise the economy. And they need to base their power not on the bureaucratic and repressive institutions of bourgeois state machine, the military, police, special forces and bureaucratic apparatus, but on workers' and peasants' councils and the armed working class.

Such governments could serve not only as an important means for a revolutionary overthrow in one country. They need to be defended by the whole European working class against the unavoidable counterrevolutionary plots by the national bourgeoisie, European or other imperialist powers. Ultimately,

they will only be able to survive and realise their full revolutionary potential, if they not only break the power of their national capitalist class, but aim to spread the revolution throughout the European continent, providing the basis for a Socialist United States of Europe. For such a period of transition, of revolutionary struggle on the whole continent, a European action programme, which combines democratic, social and transitional demands remains fully valid.

More than that, a socialist Europe must base its relations with the surrounding regions of the world on solidarity, equality and internationalism. Then, the causes of migration due to poverty, wars, climate change, could really be changed, no capitalist EU can do that. A socialist Europe can implement the rights of migrants, guarantee them full citizens' rights and put an end to the shift to the right, the threats of racism. A socialist Europe would end mass unemployment, provide equal and just living conditions, expropriate the bourgeoisie and make meaningful use of the human skills and material wealth created in Europe. Such a Europe would need to be based on a democratic planned economy, providing the means for a real tackling of the environmental and climate problems.

All this is much more "realistic" than hoping that today's EU can simply be reformed or that the class struggle in single independent countries will produce socialism.

As we have seen, the existing mass parties of the working class – either traditional reformist, new "left" populist parties like Podemos or La France Insoumise, or those which oscillate between reform and revolution, can offer an answer to the urgent questions of the future.

Only new revolutionary workers' parties and a new revolutionary International can provide such a perspective and give a lead to the struggle. Our international current, the League for the Fifth International fights for such a programme of international class struggle, for a revolutionary Marxism of the 21st century, for the Socialist United States of Europe.

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