A deadly plague is spreading across Europe - the plague of mass unemployment. It brings with it the terrible fear of losing livelihoods, homes, pensions. How can it be stopped? And how can the workers fight back?

Already there are officially 14 million unemployed in the 27 member states of the European Union (Source: Eurostat). Some put the figure as high as 20.8 million. And the numbers are rising at breakneck speed.

Across the EU, unemployment rose to 8.6 per cent in April 2009; up from 6.8 per cent twelve months ago. If we include all the countries using the Euro, it rose even more, to 9.2 per cent from 7.3 a year before.

In Spain – so far the worst affected country - a staggering 18.1 per cent is unemployed: nearly one in every five.

Young people are hit especially hard. Even before the recession the under-25s were concentrated in insecure jobs with low pay and very limited employment rights. Now they are losing jobs at a rate of thousands every day. And thousands more across Europe are failing to secure a first job when they leave school. Official figures show that 18.5 per cent of under-25s are jobless.

The capitalist employers and the governments that back them - are now demanding that workers volunteer for redundancies, work short-time for lower wages, take months of unpaid leave, take pay cuts or even - in some extreme cases - work for nothing! Why are they demanding these sacrifices? They claim it will save ?our? companies, ?our? industries and ?our? national economies. And so the workers are asked to pay the price of an economic crisis we never caused.

The employers promise that when the recession is over and recovery comes, these sacrifices will be repaid in full. They are lying. When the time comes they will claim that cut-throat competition from other capitalists in Asia makes it ?impossible? to go back to the old wage and staffing levels. Millions of the jobs lost in this crisis will be gone forever, wreaking lasting damage on communities and households across the continent.

Weak Leaders

In every European country, the official leaders of the working class are capitulating to the employers? demands. Accepting the capitalists? argument that ?we all? have to pay the price of the crisis, the leaders of the trade unions and the social democratic and Labour parties are preparing to surrender the workers? hard won gains. They are negotiating deals, supposedly to save jobs or companies facing total collapse, based on what are called give-backs in the USA: ?voluntary? redundancies, lowered pay, slashed pensions, flexible working time, worse working conditions, shortened holidays, replacement of permanent
and regulated work with part-time, sub-contracted, insecure employment.

In many countries, the first tidal wave of attacks hit the private sector; first finance in 2008, then in 2009 retailing (Karstadt, Woolworths) and manufacturing (Continental, Vauxhall) felt the hammer blows. In other countries, like Germany, where the core of the working class is still employed in manufacturing, the worst lay-offs have been avoided via short-time work and the state taking on parts of the wage bill.

But this reprieve will end, and when it does it will lead to a further wave of mass closures and redundancies. At the same time, politicians, faced with historically high budget deficits because of their bailouts, are talking of slashing public spending. A next wave of attacks will thus fall on the public sector workforce.

Politicians and the millionaire media will point an accusing finger at teachers, nurses, civil servants, social workers, public transport workers, demanding that ?they too? must make sacrifices. ?Look at the concessions your private sector colleagues are making,? they will say, ?where is your solidarity with their suffering??

**We must make the bosses pay the cost of their crisis**

The working class movement should totally reject these cynical calls for sacrifice. Certainly we need solidarity, but this means resisting the cuts together, not sharing the suffering out between us. We need the solidarity of resistance.

In the great strikes and marches in France, Greece and across Europe last year, workers and youth raised the slogan ?We won?t pay for their crisis?. Strikes, demonstrations, occupations and blockades can force the capitalists and their governments to withdraw their cuts. So who should pay for the crisis? The capitalists themselves! To start building a movement that can force them to pay for it, we need to unite our mass actions across Europe.

We should set up anti-crisis committees in towns and cities across all the countries of Europe to co-ordinate resistance to the effects of the crisis. They should draw in the delegates of all existing organisations fighting back against the crisis: representatives of trade unions, of local campaigns of tenants and students, of the unemployed, of the organised and of the unorganised layers coming into struggle for the first time.

With joblessness soaring we need a mass movement of the unemployed - led by democratically elected representatives of the unemployed themselves. Trade unions should give financial support to unemployed movements.

As in previous economic crises, to be heard the unemployed will have to take to the streets, to march in huge numbers, to make the social blight of unemployment visible to all. The marchers must demand work or full maintenance, training and education, paid recreation, paid holidays and free healthcare. Who should pay for this? The corporations and the super-rich.

The luxury spending of the parasitical millionaires, the huge sums wasted on weapons and wars, all make perfect targets for direct protest action by the unemployed. In this way we can expose the lunacy and cruelty of capitalism to millions. Mass unemployed movements should take sides with every sector of workers in struggle showing that they will not be used as strike breakers: on the contrary that they will join the picket lines, shoulder to shoulder with the employed workers, to show that the working class united will never be defeated.

? No to all redundancies and workplace closures!
Occupy, march, strike to save our jobs and livelihoods!

The wave of workplace occupations against factory closures in France, Germany, Ireland and Britain shows the way forward. Occupations can stop the asset strippers, force the opening of company records, give workers a lead and an example to follow across industry, encouraging solidarity action from workers in the same company, industry or district.

Wherever workers occupy the call should go out to the local labour movement, to the youth and the unemployed to come to the occupations to support with mass pickets and demonstrations, surrounding and blockading any attempts by the employers and police to retake occupied workplaces or remove plant and equipment. Occupied workplaces should become fortresses of resistance to unemployment, an inspiration to the whole working class.

An initial series of occupations can lead to great wave, as happened in France and Italy in 1968 and 1969. As in the 1960s, this can force major concessions from the bosses and the state, in a way that normal peaceful negotiations or sectional strikes would not. But a mass occupations movement opens up an even grander perspective. It poses the question: who should control industry, the bosses or the workers? And it opens the prospect of a struggle for working class power over the whole of society, of an economy planned by the workers to meet human need not private greed, which could end the misery of capitalism's crises, cycles and slumps, its mass unemployment and exploitation, forever.

The uprising of the youth in Greece in December 2008 and the general strikes in France at the beginning of 2009 proved the willingness of millions to fight. But what prevented these first waves of resistance from going forward? It was the leadership of the trade unions and of the workers' traditional reformist political parties which prevented the struggle from spreading.

That is why we need to build anti-crisis committees of delegates that can organise the struggle from below, with the official leaders where possible, and without them where necessary. And we need to challenge the trade union leaders from within the trade unions: to fight for the unions to stop negotiating givebacks and change course, to become organisations of real resistance, of struggle, organisations to mobilise millions against the offensive of the ruling class.

The trade union leaders and their allies in the reformist social democratic and official Communist parties will do all they can to prevent this from happening. The only way to stop them is to make a combined call: to demand the leaders take action, and to call on their millions of members to take action unofficially if the leaders won't sanction it.

A rank and file movement in the trade unions – organising union members for action with the officials where possible, without them where necessary – can control union leaders, ensure that they earn no more than the average of their members, and that they can be recalled by the membership. It can fight to replace do-nothing officials with fighters. And it can link up across the unions to deliver action and solidarity wherever it is needed.

**Against unemployment**

- 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 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 there is short-time working, or where bosses have tried 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, helping put the unemployed back to work.

**Employers are using the crisis to slash real wages and to increase precarious working**

To prevent the employers reducing millions to poverty and insecurity, and undermining our collective strength, 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 a 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 lesser legal protection for workers. Real jobs for the unemployed. not poverty labour schemes

? All contract, temporary, 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.

**Women must not pay for the crisis**

Millions of women in Europe are still denied the opportunity to work as wage labourers outside the home. 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 less than men for doing exactly the same job.

All this was true before the social crisis hit. Now working class women have to prepare for a major propaganda offensive of the right. When unemployment reaches mass proportions, reactionaries seek to use the social crisis to roll back those gains that have been made, arguing that a ?women?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 Ireland and Poland, where the church still has enormous influence over education and healthcare, it is in reality impossible for the vast majority of women to obtain an abortion. The separation of these vital services from the church remains an essential democratic demand.
Defend a woman’s right to work
Defend the social services against the cuts
Demand full pay equality between men and women.
In every European country we demand a woman’s access to free birth control and abortion on demand without restrictions.

Governments, faced with paying for huge handouts to the bankers are preparing massive cuts in social services. This will hit working class women particularly hard. In education and the care of young children, the sick and the elderly, women make up a majority of the workforce. It is working class women who will have to pay for these cutbacks, throwing the care of children, the sick and the elderly onto unpaid women in the isolated family unit. The deepening social crisis, poverty, the despair of mass unemployment is also bound to increase the physical and mental abuse of women, including rape and domestic violence.

Defend the social services, no to a return to the isolation of the home, for a mass mobilization under the slogan - women will not pay for their crisis.

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 enormously increased with all forms of communication now open to spying. The right to freedom of assembly and demonstration have been narrowed and police forces have used these 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
Charge or release! 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 - i.e. 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 fight 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 or workers to move across Europe in search of work. Against all immigration controls. Down with the Shengen treaty. 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.
? Mass action to stop fascists 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. Although today fascism is growing by posing as a ?respectable? democratic party, it will eventually resort to street marches and violent provocations against migrants, Roma Muslims, national minorities, black people and Jews. It will go on to target its historic enemy, the organised working class movement, offering its services to the bosses as strike breakers and intimidators, as the Blackshirts and the Nazis did in the 1920s and 30s. Fascism?s ultimate aim is the destruction of the workers? movement. We must campaign for mass united working class action now to crush the fascist organisations.

? At the same time we take to the masses ? sacked workers, the youth without jobs ? a message of struggle directed not against scapegoats but against the real causes of the crisis: the capitalists. We answer the counter-revolutionary despair of fascism with the revolutionary hope of the struggle for socialism.

? For equal rights in the use of languages: for the right of immigrants to use their mother language. 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 appropriate language skills. At the same time we are for investment in education programmes for immigrants to assist them in learning the language of their country of residence.

? 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. For the creation of a culture of common struggle based on internationalism, working class independence and solidarity.

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

The decline of the United States as the dominant world economic power, the calling into question of the dollar as the unchallenged world money, opens up the prospect of increasing rivalry between America and Europe, as well as with new powers, especially China. The workers of Europe, while opposing US led actions like the invasion and occupation of Iraq or the threats against Iran, must not be dragged into a European patriotism, to the project of building up a unified 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 this new European superpower would be a peaceful or a ?social? world power. But this is a deception - one that the Social Democratic, Labour and official Communist parties have joined the bosses in spreading.

A European superstate 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?. The twentieth century shows how this ends up ? in immensely destructive wars. We have to start our opposition to this frightful perspective 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. We should also oppose the expansion of ?our? national military forces and campaign against recruitment of the unemployed. We should call for the immediate withdrawal of all forces stationed overseas and all spending on the imperialist armed forces: not a penny, not a person for the defence of this capitalist 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 and 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 secrecy 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 should 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 Viking-Laval, 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 political and economic crisis that is sweeping Europe and the world is widely understood to be a crisis of the capitalist system - of the banks, finance houses and corporations that own and control our lives. But what is the alternative?

To protect workers from being the victims of successive economic crises and downturns, to prevent the unemployed and the ruined middle classes falling into such desperation that they again become the tools of fascist and racist demagogues, it is necessary once more to win millions to the only alternative to capitalism - socialism, a society in which the economy is democratically planned, in which private ownership of the means of production is ended, in which production is not for profit but for need, in which unemployment, economic cycles and recessions are a thing of the past, and in which the division of society into exploiting and exploited classes is at last overcome.

It is not enough simply to oppose neoliberalism, which is the capitalists' policy over the last two decades of maximising profits through privatisation and deregulation. Today the capitalists have been driven by the financial crises to make society as a whole and in particular the working class bear the burden of their losses. They have done this by reversing the neoliberal orthodoxy and using state intervention to save their system by taking over the banks' toxic debts. As they try to offload their losses onto rival powers they whip up nationalist suspicion and hatred against their competitor countries. It is necessary not only to oppose neoliberalism, but capitalism itself, and to be a consistent anticapitalist today means to fight for the alternative to capitalism - to be a socialist.

Can there be a socialist Europe? Europe is not a single state nor yet a single economy. It does not have an integrated European-wide workers' movement. But it is already far more than a set of dislocated states and economies. There is great unevenness but also connectivity - companies with production chains made up of plants in several countries, like GM Europe, Siemens, Fiat. The 16 states with the Euro as their currency have ceded to the European Central Bank an enormous degree of control over their economies.

There is no question of going back to isolated nation states and economies - a move that would further collapse trade and the productive forces, and lead to even greater misery than that we face now. The answer is to go forward to a socialised and planned European economy. To do this means to take power out of the hands of the capitalist and their politicians, doubtless starting first in one country, but rapidly spreading the revolution across the continent.

The goal must be to connect resistance to the crisis to the fight for workers to take the power into our own hands. The very organisations that we need to form to resist mass unemployment today can become the instruments of our rule tomorrow. The joint committees against the crisis and cross-sectoral co-ordinations of workers and youth that we need to form in every town and city can become great 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 can become the instrument for confronting and overcoming the resistance of the capitalist state. A workers government based on the working class organisations can break up the capitalists' power and systematically take over their property and establish a socialist planned economy.

New Anticapitalist Workers' Parties
To ensure this happens we need to prepare the most advanced and determined sections of the workers - the vanguard of the working class - and unite it on a European scale, for a revolutionary struggle across the continent. Solidarity action with the workers of whichever country is taking the lead at any given movement raises the temperature of revolt in the other countries. We need new anticapitalist working class parties in every country, and to unite them as sections of a new world party of social revolution - a fifth International.

These parties must be parties of class struggle not class compromise. They must never enter capitalist governments and seek to run the capitalist state as the Italian party Rifondazione Comunista did, as the German Left party has done in regional government, and as the parties of the ?European Left Party? seek to do.

When they stand in elections, new anticapitalist workers? parties should do so not with the aim of fooling workers with reformist panaceas nor reaching out to the middle classes with a pro-capitalist policy, but to win millions to the programme of revolutionary socialism. Revolutionary workers? candidates, taking only the wage of a skilled worker and accountable to their party, will fight to win millions to the programme of workers? revolution, a workers? government, to effect a transition to socialism and break the resistance of the bosses.

It will be necessary to link the very first stages of a socialist transformation in Europe to the uprooting of the rule of the banks and industrial and trading corporations over huge swathes of Asia, Africa and Latin America. A workers? government in Europe would call on the masses of the ?third world? to take the local operations of European multinationals into their own hands. It would cancel the debts of the underdeveloped world to European banks and governments. Together with the working class, popular and indigenous organisations in these continents we would design and launch a global programme of sustainable development that not only protects our environment but restores the damage done by two centuries of blind capitalist exploitation and secures a harmonious future for all humanity.

A socialist Europe would act as a beacon of solidarity and support for the third world, as an active opponent of all imperialist adventures.

Can the programme we set out above be realised within the framework of capitalism? No ? while this or that demand might be forced out of the capitalists as a by-product of the class struggle, the bourgeoisie will struggle to the last to maintain its profits, its property and its power. That is why it strives today to undo every last one of the gains the workers secured in the aftermath of the devastation of World War Two. That is why if we want to make permanent gains we must dispossess the capitalists for good ? breaking up their state power, removing their ownership and control, suppressing their resistance and, over decades of systematic economic planning, finally dissolving the class division of society altogether so that no restoration of capitalism is desirable or possible.

As the plague of capitalist crisis once again threatens Europe with the shadows of the past, with the nightmare of mass unemployment, racism and war, so once again the alternative must become the conscious goal of millions: the Socialist United States of Europe as part of a socialist world.

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