



London ESF: Istanbul preparatory meeting must place the Assembly of the Social Forums at the centre of the London ESF

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L5I members present at the Istanbul Preparatory Assembly of the 2004 European Social Forum during the weekend 16-18 April proposed a number of measures to try and ensure the ESF in London in October is a success.

It is essential that sufficient time is allocated to the Assembly of Social Movements at the London ESF. This Assembly is critical for the ESF if it is to be more than a talking shop or a forum of ideas. Exchanging ideas is good but turning them into actions against global capitalism and imperialist warmongering is even better. February 15th 2003 - a call issued by the Assembly in Florence - led to millions being on the streets worldwide.

Moreover, we need to prepare for this Assembly starting in Istanbul, continuing at future preparatory assemblies and during the ESF by holding a daily open coordination (as was done in Florence) and the assembly itself should do all in its power to issue a call to action for the period ahead and attempt to take steps towards becoming an ever more organised and coherent political force - ultimately a new International

To start this programme we suggest the following draft declaration as a basis for discussion. We think this can and should be discussed in the months ahead on websites and e-groups.

In addition the League for the Fifth International strongly supports the calls for a youth space and youth assembly to be held during the ESF. Youth are massively represented at the ESF gatherings and anticapitalist mobilisations but shockingly absent from the platforms and leadership level.

Draft Declaration for the Assembly of Social Movements

We, the European Assembly of Social Movements, meeting for the third time in London in 2004, reaffirm our opposition to the prevailing global order of war, occupation, exploitation, neoliberalism, poverty and capitalism.

We appeal to the working people, the youth, the poor in city and countryside, to women, oppressed nationalities, racial and sexual minorities, to the excluded, the marginalised and the exploited. Let us unite across Europe in struggle against the unsustainable system of inequality and violence, and for another world based on equality, an end to war and the sharing of the world's resources.

Down with the war on terror - Troops out of Iraq

We condemn the conquest and occupation of Iraq, the privatisation and seizure of the countries resources, the undemocratic and dictatorial rule of the Provisional Coalition Authority and the murderous repression of the Iraqi resistance and slaughter of civilians by US-led coalition troops. Just as this Assembly called millions on to the streets in February 2003 to demonstrate opposition to the attack on Iraq, so today we show our solidarity with the Iraqi people and their resistance movement and our opposition to imperialism. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all Coalition troops from Iraq so that the Iraqi people may determine their own future. We appeal to the peoples of Europe to take mass actions in every country to obstruct the war effort of the occupiers and to force them to withdraw their

troops.

No to the militarised European superpower

In Europe, opposition to the hypocritical Bush-led War on Terror, has brought down Jose Maria Aznar in Spain, Bush and Blair's closest ally in Europe. This led to another push by Germany and France to drive through a constitution for the enlarged European Union. Their aim is to strengthen the EU as a rival to the USA, economically, politically and eventually militarily.

We reject this project for a new militarised capitalist superpower in Europe. The European Union is a cartel of huge financial, industrial and retailing corporations and agribusinesses formed to maintain a share of this plunder and grab even more. We, the working and oppressed people of Europe, have no more loyalty to this would-be super power than to the US Empire.

We hold out the hand of solidarity to millions outside Europe, pledging to fight together for freedom from occupation and war, freedom from rigged trade rules, an end to the \$2.5 trillion debt of the global South and East, imposed austerity and exploitation, freedom from a global system in which 1.2 billion survive on less than a dollar a day, in which the income gap between the richest fifth and the poorest fifth has grown from 30:1 fifty years ago to 74:1 today.

Our rulers in the EU are seeking to draft a constitution which will enshrine in law privatisation, insecurity, environmental catastrophe, racist immigration controls, warmongering and above all private ownership of the large scale means of production and exchange. We reject this exploiters, constitution.

But we do not wish to retreat to isolation in a framework of competing nation-states. Far from affording social protection, the independent, capitalist nation states are just as subject to the dictates of global capital, and oppress their workers and minorities with equal savagery. All too often they oppress minority nationalities within their borders (the Basques, the Irish nationalists of the Six Counties, the Roma, and others).

Another Europe is possible only as part of another world ~ one based on social ownership, managed and planned by collectives of workers, consumers and service users. The huge corporations, banks, finance houses and monopolies must be expropriated. In place of the chaos and inequity of the market and production for private profit, we struggle for a world based on democratic planning, matching resources to human need - for a Socialist United States of Europe as a step to a united world.

Down with the racist campaign against migrants - for freedom of movement and equal rights

We declare our opposition to a Europe that excludes those fleeing the economic disaster caused by neoliberalism and the wars this system foments. The IMF's austerity programmes, the WTO's 'free trade deals', the loans of Wall Street and the City of London have led to the destruction of agriculture, industries and the public services in the name of the free market.

No wonder there is an increase in 'economic refugees'. Likewise the 'peacemaking' NATO wars in the Balkans, in Africa, the 'war on terrorism' in Afghanistan and Iraq, have created greater numbers of asylum seekers. We open our arms to those fleeing the criminal acts of our European rulers and their local agents in the rest of the world: we demand that the European Union opens its borders to them.

We condemn the way refugees are vilified when they try to cross Europe's borders. The rulers of the expanding European Union are doing all they can to break the solemnly worded covenants which their predecessors signed in Geneva in 1951 on the basic human right to asylum.

They propose 'camps' (prisons) for asylum seekers, deportation to 'safe countries'. The constant propaganda against migrants and refugees is used to deflect popular unrest away from the true causes in society and to divide the poor and oppressed against one another. The spectre of rising nationalism, intolerance and racial hatred is the direct consequence

of the global 'War on Terror', and the project for Fortress Europe.

Hands off our jobs, our pensions, our hospitals and schools

In Europe itself a wave of attacks on pension rights, healthcare, social insurance and free, high quality education was launched in 2003. The European Union, with Germany, Britain and France at the helm, has started to follow this through with attacks on working rights - actively promoting insecure employment (precarite), reducing protective laws, slashing pension rights, health and education provision, plus privatisation, lower wages and job cuts.

Western Europe's bosses want to introduce the North American system of privatised healthcare and education, the minimum of labour regulations, a welfare safety net and conditions for the poor that rival those in the global south. To do that they pressured the major parties of the labour movement into becoming neoliberal clones of the conservative parties. Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder show how far they have succeeded with this process. Over the last decade the social democratic, labour and Socialist parties have been only too willing to carry out their masters, wishes in government.

The last few years have seen a sharp rise in resistance by workers, youth and small farmers against this EU-coordinated offensive. There have been several one-day general strikes in Italy, mass strike waves in France and Austria, huge demonstrations in Greece and Spain. The strength of the working class, and the broad support it can mobilise across society, has been shown again and again.

But most of these struggles have ended in unnecessary compromises with the attacking governments and damaging concessions by trade union leaders. The cause of these was not a lack of the will to fight on the part of union members, but the leaders, fear of escalating struggle to the level needed to break the will of the governments. These rotten compromises only postpone the day that the employers and their governments return to the attack, giving them time to regroup their forces.

To overcome this we declare that the rank and file of the unions should control their own mobilisations and make sabotage of the struggle from above impossible. This process can be aided by building social forums in every city, every industry and every region, as councils of action uniting representatives from every sector in struggle.

For mass struggle, not terrorism

We condemn the act of mass terror against innocent workers and civilians in Madrid, just as we condemn the larger scale terrorism of our own 'civilised' rulers in Iraq and Afghanistan..

Since the terrorists are motivated by anger at the occupation of their countries by 'our troops' and multinationals and by the terrible suffering of the Palestinian people, the causes of terror can only be uprooted by ending these injustices. We appeal to those driven to terrorism by despair to take another, far more effective road: mass struggle.

In Genoa in 2001, we took to the streets and met with brutal and even bloody repression. In the age of 'Shock and Awe', of the assault on Fallujah, we know that our rulers will use the most unrestrained violence against the people when we resist. This assembly declares that the answer to this is neither meek submission nor blind and indiscriminate terrorism, but mass organised self-defence. We oppose all restrictions on democratic rights and liberties; we assert our democratic right to protect our marches, our protests, our communities through the formation of popular defence associations under the control of the social movements.

No more capitalist governments

Attempts to influence and persuade the capitalist governments of Europe and America to change their destructive course have fallen on deaf ears. We must conclude that they are not to be persuaded. This is because they represent not a set of false ideas or mistaken policies that can be disproved in discussion, but the vital interests of a reactionary social class that must be dispossessed and driven from power. Only struggle can do this.

The Assembly of Social Movements appeals to those parties, which at their foundation were pledged to just this goal, the social democratic, communist, left and Labour parties, to cease governing for the capitalists, alone or in coalition with openly capitalist parties. We call on the trade unions of every country to insist that all parties they support with funds and votes should break with the capitalists.

The only government we will support will be anticapitalist, and will therefore be based not on the armies, police forces, civil service and judiciary of the rich, but on social forums, co-ordinations and democratic councils of the working and oppressed masses.

A new politics - a new party

Many militants and activists over the last five years have rejected the idea of political parties. This was understandable given the disillusionment caused by the pro-capitalist policy of former parties of left in many countries and the evident corruption, lying and emptiness of official establishment politics.

But for the mass of working and oppressed people, the alternative to creating a global party of our own is not some end of politics, but reliance on existing national and capitalist parties. Instead, this Assembly appeals to social movements, unions, initiatives, groups, campaigns and parties to break with the capitalists and unite in a new organisation ^ one that is Anticapitalist, International and which strives to form a new type of government of the workers and poor people ^ in other words, a new Global Party.

As a step in this direction, the Assembly establishes a Commission to develop a proposal for a democratic structure, avoiding both the stranglehold of parliamentarians or party bureaucrats and a self-limiting and paralysing consensus. This will be placed before a democratically convened mass meeting of the Assembly of Social Movements in 2005.

Our movement declares its determination to go beyond being 'a space?'. This Assembly, which issued the call for the biggest mass mobilisation against war in human history on February 15 2003, can be and must be more than a talking shop, more than a space, more than the sum of its parts. As a movement we can win millions to a bold programme of action which will transform Europe and the world. We need the organisation, the social forums, the international assembly to adopt a plan of action now:

One which declares war on the imperialist 'wars on terror', on the Israeli genocidal attacks on the Palestinian people, and demands the withdrawal of all imperialist troops from Iraq and the Middle East and encourages and solidarises with resistance to it.

One that defends our democratic rights against the so-called anti-terrorist measures.

One that defends our social gains, public services and jobs against privatisation and rationalisation and demands that the corporate exploiters and the rich be made to pay for their maintenance and restoration.

One that makes the corporations and the rich pay for putting all the unemployed back to work and for affording all the poorly paid and insecurely employed a raise in their wages to levels decided by the unions and decent working and living conditions.

One that tears down the prison walls of fortress Europe and gives asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants seeking work the right to enter and enjoy full civil rights within the EU.

One that gives people of all faiths the right to practice their religion in peace, which does not scapegoat Muslims or demand they abandon symbols of their faith (headscarf) but which removes all compulsory religious observance from the schools, the courts: in short which establishes a secular state.

One that gives the peoples of Europe denied the right to self-determination (the Basques, all the Irish of the 26 Counties, the Kurds, the Roma, etc.) their democratic rights, including the right to their own state, should they so wish.

One that liberates women from the burden of childcare and house work, unequal wages, lack of control of their own bodies, domestic violence. One that gives full political and social rights to young people

One that elects a sovereign constituent assembly and fights for a republican and socialist United States of Europe.

One which sees the class struggle in Europe as but an integral part of a worldwide revolution to dispossess the capitalists and create a socialist world free of poverty, inequality and war.

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