



NO TO THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE MARKET!

FOR A UNITED STRUGGLE FOR JOBS WITH LIVING WAGES!

Over the last few months, all over Europe, from France to Greece, Belgium to Italy, Germany to Spain, there have been mass protests against unemployment and cuts, and struggles for improved living standards.

Unemployment continues to rise in most of Europe. Even where the economy is currently growing, as in Britain, the attacks on public services continue and pay is held down. While the rich get richer we are told that working people's living standards must fall.

It is clearer and clearer that the EMU preparations are a cover for a concerted attack on living standards. In an increasing number of countries the Maastricht Treaty and EMU have come to symbolise attacks on living standards. As European Union leaders' plans become clearer there is growing popular hostility to the EU itself. Whether or not EMU actually starts, the drive to cut living standards will continue.

Today hardly any European government is offering its population a better future. We are told that if we work harder and make sacrifices today improvement will one day come. Which day and how much of an improvement are always left vague!

During the 1980s many governments tried to use "divide and rule" tactics, mainly attacking the poorer sectors. The one attempt to attack almost an entire population, Thatcher's Poll Tax in Britain, was decisively beaten by a mass movement which forced Thatcher herself to resign. But now each government is trying to widen the net of those caught in the vicious circle of "de-regulation", casualisation, temporary contract work, enforced part-time work, cuts in spending, lower benefits, raising retirement ages and cutting pensions.

The result is that today there is growing anger and frustration among the working and middle classes. There is a growing feeling that the established politicians and structures have nothing to do with ordinary working people.

RESISTANCE TO MAASTRICHT

Added to this is the deepening understanding that the EU is run by and for big business. This is reinforced by the fact that EMU would hand even greater power

to unelected and increasingly unaccountable central bankers. The Maastricht Treaty's "Social Chapter" is little more than the sugar coating for the bitter pill of formally putting economic policy into the hands of unelected central bankers and top bureaucrats.

Active, angry resistance is growing and is starting to win some victories. Up to now the most striking example is France. The 1995 movement forced the Juppé government to back off from some of its attacks. Last year's determined struggle of the French lorry drivers was supported by a clear majority in the country. Against the trend in the rest of Europe they won a lowering of the retirement age to 55. This has inspired a wave of similar struggles in France.

But while French workers have shown that determined struggle can win gains, experience has also shown that the capitalists will return to the attack to try to reverse their defeats.

WHAT ALTERNATIVE ?

The attack on living standards which started during the 1980s was not accidental. It was a result of a slow-down in the world economy and falling profit rates. Clear signs of this were the reappearance of permanent mass unemployment in every European country and the demands for spending cuts.

However working-class resistance meant that governments could not go all the way in taking back gains of the last 50 years. So, despite the cuts, there was a continuing rise in the EU countries' public sector debt as unemployment and other benefits continued to be paid while the economy was in crisis. Because these debts posed a threat to the financial system this increased the pressure for more cuts.

Now the propaganda of all governments is that "there is no alternative" but to accept a reduction in living standards and/or a longer working life. Everywhere past reforms are dismantled in order to let the market run free. As the combination of slower growth and increased international competition threatens profits the capitalists are ruthlessly trying to cut their costs.

What should be the labour movement's alternative? We cannot simply go back to the past. The post-war boom hid the contradiction between the "social"

and the "market" in the so-called "social market economy". Now in these harder times government after government is allowing the "market" to attack the "social". All governments are doing this in one form or another, because they all support the market economy. This includes those leaders who still call themselves "Socialists", "Social Democratic" or "Labour". Politically these leaders are not real socialists, they have no intention of doing away with the market.

The result of this is that these parties are tending to lose their roots within the workers movement. The question of the need to create new, genuine workers parties is coming onto the agenda in more and more countries.

Often where labour movement organisations fight back there is still no real alternative to the market being put forward. In this situation the combination of talk of "globalisation" and the attacks being made under the EU's banner can give rise to right-wing movements using nationalism, racism and demagogic anti-corruption slogans to exploit people's anger. The workers' movement must lead the struggle against the Maastricht attacks and not have anything to do with right-wing, nationalist opponents of EMU. Racism must be stamped upon wherever it raises its head.

Competition for jobs is encouraged between cities, EU countries and between EU and workers outside, setting worker against worker. In countries such as France and Germany right wing politicians attack foreign workers, trying to blame them for mass unemployment. The workers movement must resist these divide and rule tactics.

Just as we need solidarity and workers' unity in a workplace, we need it internationally. Links must be made between workers in the same companies, industries and across all of Europe, not just the EU countries — real links between the union activists, not token international "works councils" suspended in mid-air.

These links must be built to prevent the use of divide and rule tactics and build the basis for interna-

tional solidarity action. The long struggle of the Liverpool dockers has shown how this can be done.

As a starting point the trade unions should organise a European day of action against falling living standards, unemployment, cuts and privatisation.

FOR A SOCIALIST EUROPE

Increasingly it is being asked: what is the alternative to the blind play of the market? How can the use of economic resources be planned for the mass of the population and not the profit of the few? Only socialist public ownership and democratic control over the key industries and finance can provide an answer to these questions.

For a time a combination of factors seemed to have undermined the idea of socialism. There was disillusion caused by the sharp right turn by Labour, Social Democratic or "Socialist" parties in government. The collapse of the USSR and the reintroduction of capitalism seemed to show the failure of "real existing socialism".

Though the Stalinist regimes in the East were far from democratic, their overthrow has not opened the way to heaven. Parts of the former Yugoslavia have been destroyed by civil war. Generally a new capitalist elite has become very rich while the masses struggle to survive. As time goes on more and more will ask: who has really gained from the market economy?

In all parts of Europe the effects of capitalism in crisis is preparing the way for an international revival of socialist movements. The experience of struggle, the rejection of illusions in the EU and of nationalism can provide the basis for the idea of the creation of a democratic socialist Europe by the joint action of the working people of Europe.

Activists in the different national affiliates of the Committee for a Workers International are working with other fighters not only to end the market's grip in their own countries but also for a genuine Socialist Europe extending the hand of solidarity to the rest of the world.

Concretely we propose a Europe-wide campaign around the following demands:

- * For a united struggle of the working people of Europe against the ruling class's attacks.
- * For a European Day of Action against unemployment, cuts and racism and for jobs for all, a living minimum wage, a shorter working week with no loss in pay, and earlier retirement.
- * Opposition to the whole Maastricht Treaty.
- * Away with the insecurity and chaos of the market economy. Democratically plan the economy in the interest of working people by taking the key sectors of the economy into public ownership.
- * No to the bosses' EU ! For a Socialist Europe!

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