

The left must step up For a day of action across Europe!

The capitalist crisis is not only a crisis for the ruling class: it is a crisis for society, a society in which the working class forms a clear majority. It underlines the responsibilities of the left. The crisis contains not only the possibility of the left organising the working class so it can act in a decisive way and make the transition to communism. It also carries with it the inherent danger that - if the left does not actually take its responsibilities seriously - then we face what Rosa Luxemburg famously called 'socialism or barbarism'.

There are more features of barbarism inherent in this present crisis than there are of immanent socialism. In 1929 many millions did believe in a socialism of some kind or another. While many of those socialisms might have been entirely illusory, substantial sections of the working class had an idea about an alternative society. There was a shared class language, a shared class outlook. More than that, workers were organised to achieve their ends in powerful trade unions, co-ops, political parties, etc.

We all know the twofold tragedy. Social democracy became incorporated into the state: in effect it served to deliver palliatives so as to maintain capitalism. The 'official communist' parties were rendered pliant instruments of Soviet foreign policy. In Germany the most powerful working class on the face of the planet was destroyed as a result of the failures of social

democracy on the one side and 'official communism' on the other. Barbarism spread like a cancer over the face of Europe.

Economic collapse brings not only unemployment, increased migration, pay cuts and speed-ups, but the real danger that what remains of working class self-organisation could disintegrate.

Where now?

Capitalism's crisis provides opportunities for the left. But it also demands a break with sect-building, constitutionalism, movementism, left nationalism, economism and all forms of mechanical thinking.

However, the left is still woefully divided, even in the fight against the cuts. Unity of the various anti-cuts fronts is an urgent necessity to effectively challenge the Con-Dem government.

Politically too, the answers of the left are inadequate. For example, the call for a 'general strike' (or, as the Socialist Workers Party puts it, 'all out, stay out') is nothing but leftist posturing, designed to showcase the left's militancy at rallies and demonstrations. Most groups view the present situation merely as an opportunity for their sects to grow. That is totally irresponsible.

So is the attempt to turn back time and fight for Keynesian politics. Keynesianism is a method to try and manage capitalism in decline. Since the late 19th

Socialism or barbarism





century capitalism has turned away from market competition and towards monopoly and the state. Capitalist imperialism went hand in hand with the incorporation of the labour bureaucracy, massive arms spending and world war. Keynesian economics became the accepted common sense of the bourgeoisie and is often, lazily, linked with peace, rationality and the good times.

In reality Keynesianism, with its government manipulation of the money supply, heavy taxation of profits, demand management, nationalisations and full employment, was the continuation of the organised capitalism which began in earnest during World War I and was taken to new heights in World War II.

And yet, in Ireland, the United Left Alliance - a marriage of convenience between the SWP and the Socialist Party - stands on a political platform eerily reminiscent of the 'official communist' Alternative Economic Strategy from the 1970s and 80s. This type of programme is based on a nationalist fallacy. Keynesianism, even left Keynesianism, cannot succeed in isolation and cannot lead to socialism. Either there would be flight of capital, imperialist sanctions or internal rebellion by the desperate, starving people. As for socialism, it is by definition international. History has shown us that socialism in one country does not lead to communism.

For a European day of action

We need a programme that is the exact opposite of such a short-termist, nationalist outlook. An all-Europe protest strike against austerity and against rule by the bankers would be a good first step. It would symbolise not just our opposition to the EU of bureaucrats and bosses, but our conviction that it is *necessary* for the working class to unite into a single Communist Party of the European Union.

We need a mass party, a party where there is unity in action, but freedom of criticism, a party which operates democratically, where factions can be formed. In other words, a Marxist party that has nothing to do with Stalinism, popular-front class-collaborationism or the narrow-minded, bureaucratic control-freakery of the confessional sects.

The threat of barbarism is real - and not only through prolonged stagnation, hyperinflation or a spectacular collapse of the euro zone. The offloading of economic crisis from one power to another brings with it the possibility of war. Then there is the ecological crisis and global warming. Everything tells us that the working class must come to power.

The place where the working class can consolidate that power is Europe. Here it would be able to demonstrate to the rest of the planet that socialism marks a far higher level of civilisation than capitalism.

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