

Contribution to the WIN discussion: notes on Europe.

Presentation.

The class struggle is inseparably economic and political. The processes at work in Europe therefore include these two aspects in a non-separable way. In these notes, there is much talk of the European Union (EU), but we must first clarify that we do not reduce Europe to the EU. Europe is a historical reality resulting from the history of the class struggle. Its limits are not strictly assigned and the class struggle in the South of the Mediterranean, for example, largely interferes with European developments.

The dominant fact on which we would like to draw attention is that, for a dozen years but in a way that is accelerating sharply in the last period, the EU is unable to solve any problem of point of view of capital, and only accumulates them by trying to mask them, and by arriving there less and less.

An upwardly rising EU until 2005.

Until 2005, despite its contradictions, the EU and within it the Eurozone seemed to be in a bottom-up process of strengthening cooperation between the capitalist states that constitute it, for the main benefit of the most powerful among them. plan of capital accumulation, Germany, but not only.

The EU was growing. On 1 May 2004 four former Soviet bloc countries, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, forming the so-called Visegrad group, three former so-called Soviet republics, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, a former Yugoslav republic, Slovenia, plus Malta and Cyprus joined the EU, followed by Romania and Bulgaria on 1 January 2007, and Croatia on 1 July 2013.

It is important to remember that the four countries of the Visegrad group minus Slovakia were members of NATO since 12 March 1999, that the three Baltic countries, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia entered on 29 March 2004, as well as Croatia and Albania on 1 April 2009 and Montenegro on 7 June 2017. NATO preceded the EU and set the pace, attesting to the inability of the European powers to put in place the common foreign and security policy announced in the Maastricht Treaty (1992).

The Eurozone had been in place since 1999 around the German-French nucleus formed since the formation of the European Monetary System in the late 1970s (Germany, France, Benelux countries, Austria, Finland, Ireland, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, 11 States), the euro has become the common currency of the area since 1 January 2002, and it has continued to grow gradually, from Greece in 2001 to Lithuania in 2015. Officially, even the United Kingdom has Uni was called one day to be part of it.

German imperialism was at the heart of these processes, but had struggled for more than a decade to "digest" the former GDR, where ostmark-deutschmark monetary parity and substantial state mass unemployment and popular excitement. The SPD came to power in 1998 in alliance with the Greens, then assumed, especially under the second term of Chancellor Schröder (2002-2005), a massive attack against the level of wages and conditions of employment, aiming to strongly increase the rate of surplus value, comparable to Thatcher's "reforms" in the United Kingdom and the Macron government's current actions in France. This was the "Harz Plan" (named after the former Volkswagen staff director, champion of flexibility). It had the political effect of starting to break the

electoral and social base of the SPD, associated from 2005 in the coalition led by the CDU-CSU led by Angela Merkel (Schröder then "withdraws" from political life and becomes the capitalist leader of the German-Russian trusts building the North-Stream gas pipeline, then of the Russian state-owned company Rosneft).

Financial crisis, "public" debt crisis and eurozone crisis.

On September 15, 2008, the collapse of Lehman Brothers incandescent the global financial crisis triggered by the general indebtedness of the economy, and the population, of the United States, whose reasons are rooted in the general course of capitalist accumulation on a world scale. In the months that followed bankruptcies, stock market downturn and wave of dismissal fell on the European continent. It turns out that no state, and certainly not the United Kingdom or the virtuous Germany (but the "rotten assets" are there especially in the regional banks, linked to the Länders), does not escape the speculative bubbles threatening 'burst. Central banks are heavily involved in saving financial institutions and stock market capital.

After having produced a strong social mobilization in Iceland, which was already attacking the so-called "public debt" head-on - and blocked any prospect of rapprochement with the EU - it is state indebtedness aggravated by aid to banks that, from late 2009-early 2010 to early 2013, the eurozone crisis epicenter of the global economic crisis. The fundamental reason is that in times of crisis, the trend towards equalization of profit rates becomes a general melee to get rid of losses on the backs of competitors. Interest rates, for the same currency, then start to diverge in the eurozone, between Germany and Nordic and Eastern countries inscribed in its wake on the one hand, where they remain stable, the Mediterranean countries plus Ireland, kindly referred to by the acronym PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Spain) by the Brussels bureaucrats, where they explode, on the other hand, France being in between. In fact, the eurozone does not function as a single currency area.

The explosion of the Eurozone is avoided for the first time in the summer of 2012: the president of the European Central Bank based in Frankfurt, Mario Draghi (former vice president of Goldman Sachs for Europe and makeup of Greek public accounts in 2001 at the time of Greece's entry into the eurozone) states that the ECB is willing to buy State bonds from the countries of the zone in an unlimited way, with the implicit approval of A. Merkel hitherto reluctant, in the context of the defeat of Sarkozy French presidential and the Italian political crisis (but the ECB will not have to make massive redemptions, interest rates Italian, Spanish and Portuguese relaxing). The European crisis of "public debts" rebounds however in Cyprus in March 2013, where Russian capital exports are involved, especially in Greece.

Greece, treated as a country of feigners by the German popular press, is in fact the country subjected to the worst siphoning of its resources and capital, via the interest rates and the "repayment of the (supposedly) public debt". The implementation of this policy by PASOK-dominated governments led to the collapse of PASOK, and to its virtual replacement by Syriza, a political coalition dominated by currents stemming from the history of the Greek CP. The arrival in power of Syriza in early 2015 produces a phase of confrontation between the Greek nation and the so-called European institutions, with intervention, also, the IMF, Syriza having formed a "sovereignist" government, not breaking with capital (the Ministry of Defense returning to a right-wing nationalist bourgeois party, ANEL). The confrontation goes up to the referendum victory of the

popular rejection of the demands of "Brussels" and, in fact, of Frankfurt (5 July 2015), directly followed by the spectacular capitulation-alignment of the head of the government, Alexis Tsipras, imperialist and financial requirements. Almost instantaneously, this government that was supposed to embody the coming to power of the "radical left" has become a real neocolonial, repressive and corrupt government.

The political and social defeat of Europe, thus inflicted on the proletariat, avoided for the second time the explosion of the eurozone (the interest rate differentials did not end, but are less than in 2009 -2015 and above all, base rates are now generally very low or even negative). But basically nothing is settled with regard to the financial bubbles fueled by so-called "public" debts. From the proper accounting and creditworthy point of view of capital, the EU institutions and the powers that dominate it have deferred or hidden the threats, but have not removed them. For example, threats against Italian banks remain very heavy. In this context, the formation in Portugal at the end of 2015 of an externally supported PS government by the PC-Verts coalition and by the extreme left, which has stopped the worst austerity measures, is probably the extreme point. what remains possible without disruption and direct confrontation with capital, the state and the EU, and remains extremely limited and precarious.

Arab revolutions and their consequences.

At the end of 2010 a social explosion broke out in Tunisia, part of the poor and unemployed South. Three weeks later, on January 14, 2011, President-dictator Ben Ali is ousted by the general strike and demonstrations. A fragile parliamentary system is established. On February 11, against a huge popular movement, in a much more populated country, Egypt, Mubarak must do the same. Between these two countries, insurrections burst in Libya, notably in Cyrenaica. French imperialism (and its president Sarkozy, who had direct reasons to prevent his former accomplice Kadhafi from speaking in a people's court) is sparking a preventive intervention of NATO, which perpetuates the explosion of the country under the aegis of various armed groups. In Syria, from Daraa, at the beginning of March, a popular uprising broke out. Unable to arm herself enough, she is confronted with bloody repression and foreign and Islamist interventions. The "Arab revolutions" also affect Yemen and Barhein and, directly or indirectly, have echoes in dozens of countries including, in black Africa, Burkina Faso and Senegal, Mali under attack by Islamist groups from the collapse of the Libyan state, all leading French imperialism to a growing military involvement. In the North of the Mediterranean, the movement of Indignados in Spain is directly inspired, at the beginning, by this revolutionary wave.

European imperialisms supported all regimes overthrown or contested. The cycle of wars unleashed, not by revolutions, but by counter-revolutions, Islamist and / or military, is beyond their control, including in Libya, where Sarkozy, followed by Cameron, was initially on the initiative. The war in Syria sees the United States and Russia engage, from 2013, in a conflictual collaboration where it is the Russian imperialism which, at the end of 2015, conducts massive bombings of the type of what the United States United did before them elsewhere, against the Syrian insurgency. This war and the bloody and barbarous mass repression by Bashar al-Assad's state apparatus are pushing millions of refugees out of Syria, who, beyond Turkey and Lebanon, are knocking at the door of Europe by the South-East. Others arrive from Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea, notably through Libya, where armed

gangs set up slavery chains under the de facto protection afforded them by the restrictive measures taken against migratory flows. EU.

In the summer of 2015, while carrying out this inhuman policy, the EU under German pressure adopts a plan for the distribution of migrants in the form of quotas allocated to each country, Angela Merkel then saying she was willing to accommodate 800,000, in view of the weak demography and tension of the German labor market. These quotas meet the virulent opposition of the Visegrad Group countries led by Hungary. At the same time, Turkey, destabilized by the Kurdish question and an attempted coup and dissatisfied with the growing incapacity of North American imperialism, which cooperates with the sister party of the Kurdish PKK in Syria, is working with Putin and Russia, and refers to a future more than indeterminate its possible accession to the EU.

This cycle, unfinished because at the time when these lines are written the old mole resurfaced in Iran, revolutions, counter-revolutions and wars, highlights the incapacity of European imperialism - as indeed of the United States and of Russia - to control and order the crises now erupting at their borders and arouse massive influx of refugees and racist campaigns against these refugees.

The crisis in the East.

At the same time, the assertion of independent Russian imperialism, based on energy revenues and armed force, popular movements and the global economic crisis, has destabilized the eastern face of the continent and the eastern fringe of the EU. A first alert had occurred in Georgia in 2008, when Russian military intervention had frozen NATO expansion projects to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

Russian imperialism, from there, "goes out of its way" and undertakes to form a Eurasian customs union of which Ukraine was an indispensable component. On November 21, 2013, the choice of the president-dictator-oligarch of Ukraine Yanushkovich (whose "coach" was Paul Manafort, former adviser of Balladur and Sarkozy and future "coach" of Donald Trump) to turn its back on an agreement of association with the EU, for the benefit of this Eurasian union, produces a process of demonstrations in Kiev, which will not stop growing and defying the repression, the "Maidan".

On 22 February 2014, he fled to the street, while the German, French and Polish foreign ministers had just adopted a compromise with the official opposition that kept him in power. The state apparatus knows a beginning of revolutionary collapse.

In the eastern coal and steel industry, a bastion of the capitalist oligarchy emerging from the bureaucracy, the oligarchs mount a "secession", quickly supported by the Russian army more or less well concealed.

In Crimea (mixed population Russian, Ukrainian and Tatar) the Russian power, from the military bases of Sevastopol and Simferopol, rises a rigged referendum sanctioning the Russian annexation operated de facto. From the point of view of "international law", the European continent had known nothing since 1945.

The annexation of Crimea and the hybrid war in Donbas stopped the revolutionary thrust of Ukraine, but instability remains. They also provided the strategic background that will, from 2013, allow Russian intervention in Syria.

These events have resulted in a partial freeze on some trade, through EU and US sanctions against Russia, and a so-called "cold war" climate (in fact, an inappropriate term) across Europe. Central and Eastern Germany, in particular, is faced with a political option: to oppose Russia head-on in order to dominate economically and, henceforth, politically, not only the Visegrad group, but all the former Soviet republics other than Russia in Europe, or to relaunch the process, already initiated in particular in the energy field (see the posts of ex-Chancellor Schröder!) of partnership and capitalist investments in Russia. It has proved to be structurally incapable of choosing, pursuing both policies at the same time, leading to a serious political weakening, the most dramatic expression of which will be the evolution of governments in the Visegrad group countries.

A serious finding.

Before talking about it, we must observe a very serious fact, clearly revealed notably by the Ukrainian and Syrian events. The vast majority of "radical left" political currents in Europe regarded the Ukrainian and Syrian peoples as enemies, and openly or more or less shamefully supported their enemies - Putin or Bashar al-Assad.

This is true not only for the directions of these currents, but for the militant strata taken as a whole, as social strata: no internationalist solidarity is possible on the basis of their conceptions, marked by an aggressive mistrust towards the popular movements, reducing the Arab revolutions or the Ukrainian Maidan to imperialist manipulations, even to Islamist or "Nazi" movements. Moreover, a police vision of history, in which the manipulation by characters such as "Soros", "BHL" or "Rotshchild", is therefore a penetrated vision of fantasies that are those of anti-Semitism, is deeply rooted in these layers.

The denial of internationalism is paradoxically greater than at the time of the "Soviet camp" where we had comrades in the daily social struggles which, by attachment to it, refused to support Polish, Czech or Hungarian workers. Their heirs give in the denigration of practically all emancipatory struggles wherever they are. Campism of Stalinist origin gradually degenerates into a plot of fascist and anti-Semitic themes.

Of course, there are millions of young people and workers who do not respond to this bleak description. We are talking here about militant layers who are determined, precisely, to hold the upper hand in the place of these millions.

They imagine they are breaking on the left with social democracy or with the old workers' movement in general, but are exposed to these drifts and incapable of real internationalism. This is how the ordinary basic cadres of Podemos in Spain despise Ukrainians and Syrians - and now also the Catalans! Many currents that claimed to solve the crisis of the old labor movement, and even more the "populist" currents that claim to replace it by liquidating it (Podemos, insubordinate France), are not part of the solution to this crisis, but represent the supreme stage, and hopefully, but it will act for this, the last stage of the problem!

The Visegrad Group, Brexit, and Trump!

Two events of the year 2010, gone unnoticed or almost to the west, must be recalled here.

In Hungary, the elections bring back to power Victor Orban on the basis of the collapse of a "left" at the same time coming from the old PC in power, neoliberal and corrupt. Spurred by a party with a fascist and racist program, to which he presents himself as the protective bulwark, the Jobbik, V. Orban has since developed a coherent orientation, assuming a real resistance towards the EU institutions and German domination (of which point of view, Tsipras is a counter-model ...), but on a capitalist and neoconservative basis, designating gays and Muslims as dangers for Western civilization, dangers aroused and manipulated by a cosmopolitan elite embodied by financier Georges Soros. We see clearly here the articulation of anti-Arab racism, Christian reference, and anti-Semitism generally unacknowledged, but perfectly perceptible and perceived.

In Poland, a very serious national trauma is caused by the plane crash of Smolensk - in Russia, and not completely elucidated, while going there for the anniversary of the Katyn massacre - April 10, 2010 , where President Lech Kaczynski dies (and dozens of personalities including the 1980 trade unionist Anna Walentinowicz ...). In 2015 the Kaczynski Twins Party, Law and Justice (PiS) came back to power and made an alliance with Orban on the refusal of migrant quotas wanted by A. Merkel and the European Commission.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia, with coalition governments between "social democracy" and "populist right", are also blocking what is now a new form of the Visegrad group: a "populist and Christian central Europe", openly anti-Muslim and underground anti-Semitic - anti-Roma too - geopolitically in NATO, but "culturally", so to speak, in resonance with Putin, of whom Orban is the closest.

The social base that makes this phenomenon possible and provides popular support for it is the resistance to German imperialism which, in the previous phase (1989-2005), colonized these countries economically.

Until the aftermath of the 2007-2008 crisis, the United Kingdom had a class struggle rhythm quite out of touch with the continent, although the defeat of the working class in front of Thatcher weighed in on the balance of power at the international level. We would like to point out an interesting paradox: it is at this very moment that the youth movements for the right to studies, the anti-coup fights for the defense of public services and the number of strikes have risen in Great Britain since 2008-2010. , more and more echoing the social struggles on the continent, and reciprocally, that the crisis process leading to the break with the EU has occurred.

The 2015 elections saw the quasi-replacement of the Labor Party, at the electoral level, by the SNP in Scotland. This trauma provoked an unexpected reaction: the victory of Jeremie Corbyn - allowed by the direct vote that had been put in place against the unions! - which in turn produced a wave of mass adhesions. With several hundreds of thousands of genuine members Labor is by far the largest real political party in Europe to have a mass base, very far in front of all the political phenomena in fashion in the "radical left", of Podemos to insubordinate France for example. Cameron, for the first time in decades, faced with a credible labor political alternative, attempted a political coup with Brexit. We know the result.

Despite the importance of the xenophobic factor in Brexit, which is not comparable to the French No of 2005, there is no political force built on a coherent program, which would be a capitalist program and at the same time "anti-European" and "anti-globalization". Such coherence, which has proved

possible in the countries of the Visegrad group, because of their situation as semi-dominated countries, becomes total incoherence in a large imperialist country as we see it today in the United Kingdom and, since the election of Trump, squarely in the United States. It is the crisis of the ruling class, in a stalemate where it is itself filled, that characterizes the government of Theresa May: like the image of the European Union itself, unable to manage its own problems in its own interest, though it is always able to bring them back to the proletariat.

In these conditions, Great Britain became the country of Europe where, for workers' militants, putting forward a perspective at the political level seems the simplest: the Labor in power, and Theresa May outside!

However, this simplicity could be misleading. A Corbyn government that does not break with capital could end badly. But what does breaking with capital mean? Not only the satisfaction of the main demands in terms of wages, the right to study and public services. But also a democratic response to the crisis of forms of capitalist domination, the two going together because we will not sustainably respond to the main demands in the current state. The June 2016 vote calls for these democratic responses:

- the unification of all Ireland on the basis of equal rights for all,
- the replacement of the United Kingdom by a federal and republican Great Britain,
- and beyond that, the free union of the peoples of Europe in the place of the EU: neither Brussels nor the City, but the solidarity of the peoples.

Amplification presents crisis factors.

The last part of the year 2017 is marked by two notorious deepening of the crisis of the political forms of domination of capital in Europe, with Catalonia and the German elections.

The irruption of the Catalan national question saw a state, the post-Francoist Spanish monarchy, trying to impose, on December 21, 2017, elections under control and threat in Western Europe, which had not happened since Good Friday agreements in Northern Ireland (but happened and succeeded in Eastern Europe in Crimea in 2014). But the Spanish monarchy has failed. The fact that the question of Catalan independence is again raised is not the manifestation of a rise in regional powers in Europe as we often read.

It is in fact the expression of the failure of regionalization, on the model of the German Länder, set up more or less throughout the European Union, which is for example at the heart of the projects of the successive French governments of "state reform". The Spanish Regional Communities, which aimed to perpetuate the post-Franco monarchy by dissolving Catalan, Basque and Galician national issues into a set of regional clientelarities, was a model for "decentralization" throughout the EU. This model has just failed, in a crisis that openly raises the question of the democratic remodeling of certain state borders (what the consequences of Brexit have already raised implicitly for Ireland and the political status of Britain).

The German federal elections of September 24, 2017 have opened a crisis that has not been solved to date - it is now four months since Germany has no "legitimate" executive power, a situation that

has never been seen since 1945. We know the electoral causes: with a slightly higher share, the CDU-CSU loses 8.6% and the SPD 5.2% (at a historic low of 20.5%) A xenophobic party, which in Germany means party not denying the Nazi past, the AfD, is 13%, and the FDP resuscitates amounting from 4% to 10 %. Beyond figures and superficial comments, the entry of Germany into a lasting government crisis means that the contradictions of the whole of Europe, and especially of the eurozone, are submerging its economically dominant power. This is the cumulative result of all the previous crises tackled in the pages that The push of the AfD, that of the FDP, and the positions of the Bavarian CSU are all in the direction of an "anti-European" positioning of the first European capitalist country, which, after all, would complete the "anti-globalization" positioning of the world's leading power, the United States. since Trump, it being understood that, like the United Kingdom of Brexit, German capital has no alternative and no political coherence to propose in place of the policy it has followed for fifty years.

Add to this table that the Austrian elections of October 15, 2017 led to the formation of a government rather similar to those of the Visegrad group, with a brutal program and even spoliator against migrants, led by a young democrat wolf Christian, and in which the post-Nazi Austrian Liberals have the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs and the Interior.

The French paradox.

France offers a very striking apparent paradox in this context. Long regarded by commentators, international as well as French, as a deplorable "exception", because of its strikes and its social movements, it would pass almost today, with the same commentators, for the last bastion from which will leave the "European revival", by the magic of a young president!

The governments chaired by François Hollande since 2012, especially under Prime Minister Manuel Valls, wanted to do what Schröder did in Germany: to be the "left" government that would break the rights of workers.

To do this, they benefited from the absence of a political alternative on the left, which was possible and flush in the years 2012-2013, since it was the 11% of JL Mélenchon who was then a socialist breaking on the left and supported by the PCF in the framework of a "left front", which had allowed the defeat of Sarkozy in 2012 and that it could regroup the forces social and left refusing government policy. But the PCF's refusal to fight frontally the governments chaired by Hollande (he voted for example its reforms aimed at public education), on the one hand, and JL Mélenchon's evolution towards "populism" (by opposing the real popular movements of the working class, such as the strikes in Brittany in autumn 2013), have eliminated this possibility.

Hollande and Valls have launched a very brutal offensive in the wake of the shock created by the mass Islamist massacres of November 13, 2015, combining attack against democratic freedoms including xenophobic projects, and attack against labor law (El Khomri law) . Large workers' groups and trade union activists resisted this aggression for three months during strikes and demonstrations, in which the government and no doubt the political regime would have been defeated if the trade union leaders had not feared calling for total strike until the withdrawal of the El Khomri law and direct centralization against the executive power. The El Khomri law was finally adopted, but the Hollande-Valls government politically exhausted, producing the president's renunciation to represent himself and the failure of Mr. Valls at the primaries organized by the PS.

Only the maintenance of the "populist" line by JL Mélenchon throughout the presidential campaign, resulting in an aggressive policy of division, prevented him from capitalizing on the whole of the workers' and popular vote resulting from the social crisis of the previous year and caused the double failure of Hollande and Valls. He thus created the conditions of the second round Le Pen / Macron electing the product of the politics of Holland and Valls, having replaced them: Macron (although the score of Marine Le Pen, despite his self-sabotage its debate with Macron, has indicated the possibility of another policy for the bourgeoisie, threatening to break with the eurozone and the EU).

The maintenance of a fairly high level of strikes and conflicts in the companies and the public services, the confirmed will of resistance of the trade union militants, in spite of these defeats, indicate that it would be possible for the French proletariat to recover and to counter-attack, but for this it needs the unitary political regrouping of the currents thus wanting to form a left alternative to Macron. Insubordinate France has emerged as the main obstacle to this regrouping. This is not a mass movement - it should not be confused with the 19.5% of voters JL Mélenchon the first round of the presidential - but a network unified by the Bonapartist cult of its leader, combining positions leftists often anti-union and will "sovereignist" union with capitalist sectors against "Brussels", "Washington" and "Frankfurt".

The reality of the double defeat - the strikes and protests of 2016 and the 2017 presidential election - allows Macron to be on the offensive, but he still has no strong and deep popular base. Even in the layers of bourgeois notables, the mistrust remains strong towards him and the parliamentary group of his partisans is a caricature of incapacity and clientele patriotism. Its strength comes from the left-wing political obstacles mentioned above: very heavy legacy of a discredited PS, aggressive "populism" towards the unity and democracy of the IF, persistent refusal of the union leaderships to centralize and generalize the struggles exist at a point that threatens state power. It therefore remains for him to transform the test and to finish beating the wage and the youth by constituting a durable social base, which he does not have at present.

Even if he did, his overall political project, which is not his own, but that of French capitalism as such: significantly increase the rate of exploitation of the working class in France to be able to play equal game with Germany at the European level and impose a "European revival" in which German imperialism would accept more "mutualisation", has virtually no chance of succeeding, because of the real strengths of French imperialism, already overdimensioned at the political level and military, and because of the aggravation of the factors of European crisis which followed its election, indicated in the preceding point.

* * *

What is essential, in conclusion, is that as many as possible of workers and revolutionary militants, in a democratic way and aiming to break with bureaucratic practices, but in fidelity to the organization of class and in no case in national union or so-called "populism" above class, draw through public debate an alternative European political perspective to the present crisis of capitalist Europe. Because this capitalist Europe itself has no alternative and goes from crisis to crisis. A European political perspective must consider the question of power, at least "algebraically" and more precisely whenever possible, and must take into account national and geopolitical issues. Its general formula must obviously be the free union of democratic republics not subject to capital, on the whole continent, and beyond. The main task is not so much to elaborate a meticulous "program" as to

show social movements and democratic aspirations that they have a world to win by playing their own cards.

03-01-2017.