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European Social Forum

"If not now, when?"

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The document 'Contribution of the PRC to the Discussion on a European Alternative Left' starts from the new world situation, where 'the first war of the epoch of globalization, a policy of global and permanent war' is posed.

This puts in question 'all the political equilibria, the international institutions, the conception and the exercise of democracy'. In this context, the European Union (EU) has not been able to play a decisive or effective role. On the contrary, 'never has it been so obvious that, in such a difficult situation, the EU - an economic giant - is from every point of view a political dwarf' Having enumerated the setbacks of the EU and the contradictions which exist, the PRC 'opposes the establishment of a European army, which can only have offensive objectives. The current anti-war movement, unlike that against the war in Kosovo, aspires to express a hegemonic representation, a majority in Western society'... It is in the process of forming a system of alliances which involve the non-traditional pacifist sectors and collaborates closely with workers' organizations (...). One of the main reasons for this change of tendency is certainly the emergence since last year of a new movement against globalization (...). Thus, opposition to the war is growing and involves social and economic, as well as political, aspects'. After having noted that 'the process of economic integration' is currently in deep crisis and that there is 'an intrinsic fragility of the institutions of political sovereignty', the PRC 'cannot avoid expressing an extremely negative judgment of the Treaties'. It denounces 'the privatization of strategic public sectors (electricity, water, telecommunications, transport and so on) and harsh cuts in social expenditure (pensions, health, education, employment policy)'. 'These policies have not only been applied by the traditional conservative forces, but also with the support of the forces of European social democracy over the last 15 years'. The opposition can only come by mass mobilizations of the trade unions, ecologist associations and so on as well as the 'movement of movements'. These mobilizations do not have a clear political representation; in particular, the new movements are not represented by the political forces who have formed the various centre-left governments in Europe. The PRC proposes two axes; 'a Europe of economic, social and environmental rights' and 'a democratic Europe' concretized in a series of demands and proposals.

An alternative left for Europe can be built on the basis of 'a political space to the left of social democracy which allows the reproposal of the issues and themes that have been abandoned for a long time by the moderate left. For the moment, it lacks a truly organic vision of the world, and the defeats of recent decades have given this alternative left a feeling of marginality. In reality, it potentially possesses an enormous capacity for transformation, symbolic and concrete, faced with the crisis of civilization that faces our continent. We can deduce from this that a political Europe is possible under the impulsion of a great battle based on the general interests of all in recuperating the best traditions of the workers' movement. To this end, a broadly shared initiative should be prepared around themes of social justice and an alternative economic policy, which could be an essential step towards an alternative platform for the next European elections in 2004. The second consideration is motivated by the fact that on the list of forces that constitute the new alternative there are not only political parties.

The movement of movements is a fundamental actor for change in this historic phase and the themes that it proposes largely coincide largely with our priorities. We know also that to avoid remaining in a minority in relation to the moderate left it is absolutely decisive to remain in the movement, both in terms of political project and concrete opportunities to enter into contact with the diverse social realities (...). An open and non-bureaucratic approach, which would respect national particularities, - including in relation to the perspective of the next European elections - could create such a 'political entity. The task that faces the alternative left is, then, ambitious, but it should no longer be put off.

Moreover, 'if now is not the time to do it, when will it be?'