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Análisis de LAB sobre la
situación internacional

*Analyse de LAB sur la
situation internationale*

LAB's analysis about the
international situation

Zbkia

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1.- CAPITALISM: AN UNFAIR AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ORDER

LAB's analysis
about the international
situation

The international situation during the past 4 years has been characterized by the crisis of the economic system, which has above all affected above all the countries of the European Union (UE) and North America, but has also had direct consequences all over the planet.

However, it's important to point out that capitalism has condemned since its origins millions of people to situations of economic and social crisis, as is shown in the following pieces of information, to which we could add many others:

- The richest 20% of the population possesses three quarter parts of world income, while the poorest 20% only has 1.5% of world income.
- The number of poor in the world 1,750,000,000 (25% of the world population).
- Those suffering from hunger in the world in 2009 were more than one thousand million and since the crisis began the number has grown by 100 million.
- 1,000 million people (double the entire population of the UE) lack access to potable water.
- 2,600 million lack access to health care
- A child born today in Zambia has fewer possibilities of living more than 30 years than if he was born in England in 1840. Life expectancy is 35 years less on average in Burkina Faso than in Japan.
- Women are the most impoverished in the capitalist world: each year 530,000 die due to lack of care during pregnancy; of the 870 million illiterates in the world, 500 million are women.

This and other inequalities and social injustices, far from being reduced in the past years, have been growing. According to official data, social differences have retreated to levels of 30 years ago.

Also, in the countries of the European Union and the United States the crisis has meant that phenomena "unknown" until now in these countries, such as hunger, lack of health care or evictions have made themselves present in our societies.

It is important to underscore that this crisis hasn't affected the entire planet equally. So, its effects have been less in Latin America, or in the so-called "emerging economies" of the "BRIC" (Brasil, Russia, India, China) countries.

The United States continues to be the largest world power, and it doesn't renounce its hegemonic aspirations, so that it doesn't hesitate in recurring to threats or even imperialist aggression against other Peoples of the world, looking for that in alliances with conservative governments of the EU, like France, Germany or Italy. The hopes for positive change that some held with the arrival of Barack Obama to the White House didn't take long to dissipate.

Today, there continues to be an occupation led by the Yankees in countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq. Thousands of armed men, belonging to the US Army or private security companies look out for the interests of dozens of North American capital multinationals in these countries. The imperialist aggression in Libya, led by NATO, is another clear example of that. Even, one of the biggest symbols of infamy, as is the prison in Guantanamo, remains open violating all principles of International Law.

The world has stopped being unipolar and for the last decade there have emerged with strength in the international economic and political panorama first-class actors such as China and India in Asia, Brasil, South Africa or Russia, which fight to maintain their area of influence in Eastern Europe or Central Asia. On the other hand, there are all of the progressive regimes of Latin America, with Venezuela at the head.

These states carry out their own economic policies and are creating an alternative reality that on occasion can be seen as an "alternative pole" to the EU and the USA in matters of investments and international relations, which threaten US hegemony. Their policies often, though not always, enter in contradiction with hegemonic interests of the US and the EU on other continents, which not long ago were run as the "backyard" of the wealthy countries.

A clear example is the growing expansion and influence that China is carrying out in all of Africa, where they are reaching agreements for the exploitation and purchase of petroleum and prime materials, in exchange for contributing to the development of certain countries building infrastructure, hospitals, etc. But that is always at the cost of the primary interests of the Asiatic country, with the end being a hegemonic position in Africa.

Some the realities of the Latin American continent continue to be a motive of hope and example for people on the left in the entire world, because they continue on the path initiated more than a decade ago. Despite the specificities and the differences in each one of the countries, inherent in their own reality, of the contradictions and obstacles that are existent, there are common elements that allow us to speak of a turn to the left, or progressive, in countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador or Uruguay, to cite only a few cases, which together with Cuba and their more than 50 years of revolutionary process, put a counterpoint to Yankee imperialism on the continent.

The progressive and leftist governments of Latin America have opted to strengthen the process of integration that Marti called "Our America", in a process towards a second independence, in this case from the USA. In this, it is extremely interesting the spheres of cooperation like the ALBA, or Unasur, or the very diffusion and consolidation of Bolivarian thought.

In this same line, we salute the recent creation of the CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), whose constitution brought together 33 heads of state in all of America (with the exclusion of the USA and Canada), which represents 550 million inhabitants. The CELAC has as its objective the liberation of Latin American countries from the tutelage of the United States and Europe by making possible the advance of the integration of peoples, the resolution of their conflicts as well as the promotion of economic development of the countries that form a part of it. However, it isn't free of reformist and right-wing interests of those with a great disregard for certain sectors of these countries.

As far as the Middle East, the Zionist system of Apartheid continues against the Palestinian people with the explicit support of the USA and the collusion of the governments of the EU. For from undertaking a process of negotiation the government of Netanyahu continues with its expansionist and colonialist policy in the West Bank, building new colonies, or committing large scale crimes like "Operation Cast Lead" at the beginning of 2009, where Israel attacked the civilian population of Gaza with impunity, killing more than 1,400 civilians.

The Middle East has also been witness to different changes of government recently, in what has come to be known as the "Arab Spring". In spite of recognizing some common characteristics of all the countries that have lived through these regime changes (governments who been in power for decades, lack of individual and political freedoms, limited freedom of expression, etc.), it would be simplistic to think that all of these cases respond to identical standards.

On the one hand, we have the cases of countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain or Yemen counted (in the case of Bahrain they continue in power) on the support of countries of the EU and the USA. In Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen the revolts were peaceful and they had a clear social component, due to

the unrest in the people from a disastrous economic situation and a high rate of unemployment, especially among the youth, which had a high degree of preparation and training, and has before itself a future free of expectations. The revolt in Bahrain was due to the discontent from the Shiite majority for the situation of political discrimination that they suffer. In all of these cases, the governments and the Western media were, at least, complacent with the governments who used great repression against unarmed citizens although finally, except in the case of Bahrain, the governments were overthrown, in spite of that the system has continued in the hands of the military without any substantial changes taking place.

The cases of Libya and Syria, in spite of having common elements, also have large differences. If it is true that there existed a certain discontent on the part of the population, while another part supported the government in each country, it isn't less true that the EU (with France in the lead) and the USA have intervened arming certain sectors of the opposition and giving them political and military backing.

The imperialist aggression in Libya on the part of NATO is the clearest example of what we are saying. The USA, the EU and Israel wanted to take advantage of these events to be able to install favourable regimes to imperialist and Zionist interests in the Middle East (a job that was done by Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt), as has now been done in Libya, with the end of controlling this zone of great geostrategic importance, and to make off with the energy and mineral resources of these countries just as they control the countries of the Persian Gulf. In this line, it all seems to indicate that they are preparing new aggressions against Syria and Iran on the part of Israel, the USA and some countries of the EU in the medium term. The fight for the control of petroleum and prime minerals in a multi-polar world will be a constant at the international level in the coming decades.

Together with this objective, the USA covertly tries for countries like China or India whose influence today in the international panorama is growing, to move back to their situations from half a century ago, with the idea of gaining absolute control of western imperialism.

From LAB we repeat our rejection to the imperialist aggression in Libya on the part of NATO, as well as any kind of foreign military aggression against any country in the world. This does not prevent us from criticizing regimes like those of Syria or Iran, that lack democratic freedoms and where peoples such as the Kurds or the Baluches have historically been victims of repression.

2 – THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NORTH AMERICA: EPICENTRE OF THE CURRENT CAPITALIST CRISIS.

The largest and most profound financial crisis since the Second World War began in the United States, but it ended up extending itself all over the world. It is thus that the novelty of this crisis is not just its speculative nature, but also the intensity and range with which it has expanded over the entire planet.

Certainly, we can situate the most immediate origin of the crisis in the US and European housing bubble and in the irresponsible credit policy preferred by the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank.

The appearance of subprime mortgages (credits to unreliable homes), the issuing of high risk bonds or derivatives of those mortgages and their extension through financial markets all over the world ended up undermining the balances of important financial entities (some of these entities have fallen into bankruptcy and others have had to be rescued or given new capital), and it brought the whole

international financial system to the verge of collapse, given its move towards financial speculation in search of maximum profitability, something innate in the greed that drives the capitalist system.

The role played by the authorities charged with keeping an eye on the functioning of the financial systems and of supervising international finances must be denounced. Their passivity and even complicity have contributed in the creation of the crisis and that it acquired the dimension and profundity that it eventually reached.

This crisis is the consequence of the functioning of the current economic model that is based on the principles of private profit and competitiveness with the objective of giving priority to obtaining the maximum benefit. This is how the system imposes the distribution of income that favours capital over salaries of the working class; a model that leads to a larger concentration of wealth and to more elevated levels of social inequality.

This model is responsible for having created the basic conditions for the emergence and development of large movements of speculative capital that finally provoked the current situation and that brought down the system itself to its economic and social failure.

This doesn't mean that the system has been defeated, but it evidently can't be qualified as successful from the point of view of economic efficiency and social justice. We are before an economic model that in order to survive privatizes benefits and socializes losses. A model that, as we all know, condemns millions of people in the world to live in poverty, the scarcity of potable water, illiteracy, etc.

The neoliberal policies applied in Europe (as much by the authorities of the European Union as by the governments of the member states) also has actively contributed to generate its own causes in the crisis that covers our continent.

Among the fundamental causes that have participated in the creation of the crisis we can point out:

- Labour deregulation and the progressive cutbacks in workers rights and salaries as a mechanism for disciplining the working class and imposing a model for the distribution of income in favour of capital and against salaries. This has provoked the progressive decrease in the participation of wages in the wealth generated and the weakness of internal demand.
- The obsessive worries of the European Central Bank for controlling inflation contrasts with the abandonment of other economic objectives, like growth in employment or the stability of financial markets.
- Propelling a neoliberal fiscal policy directed towards the maximum restriction in public spending and the weight of the public sector on the economy. Together with this is the push towards privatizations in all sectors of the economy.
- The liberalization of the movement of capital and the deregulation of financial markets has contributed to the appearance of complex financial products directed towards speculative investment in detriment of productive investment.
- An overbearing policy favourable to the profits of capital and speculation; as well as sheltering financial paradises.
- The tolerance and impulse of an unsustainable economic model for growth.
- It also has to be pointed out that they calculate that 25% of the world GDP is based on the "dark face" of the free market capitalist system. We are talking of the profits derived from money laundering in fiscal paradises, Money that comes from the drug trade, prostitution and other criminal activities. As has been demonstrated, the financial and housing bubbles were the recipients of a large part of this "dirty money".

Curiously, the measures adopted by the US or in the EU have consisted basically of assigning enormous quantities of money to rescue the financial system from banking failures¹, but not to avoid or stop the expansion of financial capitalism.

At the same time, the generous deployment of resources destined to save the financial system by injecting capital and administering liquidity to the banks contrasts with the scarce efforts used for decades for economic growth to protect employment, combat the increase of unemployment and to guarantee a decent income level for those sectors of the population who are suffering the biggest financial difficulties.

This way of acting confirms the corporate interests that are hidden in the decisions of the EU and their scant sensibility for confronting the social consequences of the economic recession. Definitely, the commitment to capitalism in the current model of European construction reflects a dangerous model of economization of policy.

The situation gets even worse if we take into account the European banks, many of whom after cleaning up their coffers with public funds, are committing permanent blackmail to the states of the European Union, by buying public debt of those states at low interest. That is to say, the large European banks channelled a significant part of the public assistance received in the purchase of public debt, since this is one of the few certain equities in times of economic uncertainty. Instead of giving incentives to private investment in the real economy, they returned to acting in a speculative way.

It's necessary to highlight that, in contrast to the US Federal Reserve, the Bank of Japan or of China, the European Central Bank (ECB) cannot emit bonds of public debt, nor buy them from member states. Their competencies are based almost exclusively in adjusting interest rates for inflation. This makes for an entity whose members haven't been democratically elected (just as has occurred with almost all of the decision-making organs of the EU), dictate the monetary policy of the member states of the EU. The ECB that "cannot" loan money to member states has previously loaned money with beneficial conditions for the main banks. To understand the moment in which we are living in, you have to add the role that the rating agencies play. These companies, in theory, inform investors about the value of the financial products and the profitability of the issuers, whether they are states or companies. But it must be said that only three businesses² have the oligopoly in this sector and, therefore, possess an enormous power for conditioning and blackmailing states, orienting in one or another sense the stock markets. All of this has made that these companies continuously downwardly assess the economies of different states of the EU and the debt bonds emitted by these states, making their value diminish drastically: the case of Greece is the most paradigmatic, but not the only one. We also have the cases of Portugal, Ireland, Italy, the Spanish State and even, recently, the French State.

In conclusion, after the "housing bubble" which occurred when the crisis of 2008 broke out, the financial entities have resorted, after receiving billions of euros and dollars of public funds, to speculate with prime materials³ and to create a new "bubble", in this case the sovereign debt of the states of the EU.

¹The US gave 9,7 trillion dollars to problematic financial institutions, and the countries of the EU 2,3 trillion.

²Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch.

³This is one of the causes of famine in Somalia, to which must be added the severe drought that the country has suffered, as well as the high level of corruption and misrule. It is a fact that these speculative movements have had a consequence of an excessive rise in the price of food and the growth of hunger in the world.

Practically all of the governments of the European Union are taking advantage of the excuse of the capitalist crisis in the EU to deepen their project of the "reworking capitalism", as Sarkozy said.

We are present at the taking over of power in the different states of the EU by the technocrats which play a fundamental role in the banks and rating companies, just as is demonstrated in the cases of Greece, Italy or in the Spanish State. This, together with the policies that are being implemented and that we have already pointed out, has us find ourselves in front of an authentic "dictatorship of the financial world."

The measures that are being adopted already widely appeared covered in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, and now with the pretext of the crisis they are implementing them gradually, and they are even deepening in this line. They have as their axis the control of the public deficit and, therefore, limiting to the maximum public spending in its social aspect⁴, using it otherwise as an element of blackmail the growth of interest on the debt.

The specific measures are basically similar in all countries:

- Cutting salaries of public employees.
- More flexibility in the labour market, by cutting the cost of firings and raising the flexibility of the workday for the workers.
- Cutting social benefits, social spending and raising the age of retirement, as well as making the requirements to obtain pensions more difficult.
- Raising the number of privatizations, with a reduction of the presence of the public sector.
- Freezing public investment (6000 millions of € in Spain, Greece and Portugal).
- Raising taxes. For example, the VAT (16 to 18% in the Spanish state, from 21 to 23% in Greece, and from 20 to 21% in Portugal).
- Eliminating or limiting the plans and policies for equality or of linguistic normalization.

All of these measures have been adopted in a brutal way by the Spanish state, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Ireland, and with less intensity, but also partially, in the French state, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark and even Germany.

From the perspective of gender, it must be pointed out that these policies of the elimination of spending and the public sector have now given a place for the massive cuts in benefits and social aid, of infrastructure, rights and services destined for the well-being of society.

An evident consequence of this situation is that when social services disappear it is the family unit which must confront these necessities that are now not covered by the public administration and, a fruit of the prevailing patriarchal system and of the unfair division of tasks inherent in it, women are the ones who end up taking charge in the majority of cases of the necessities of care, raising in this way their work load (unpaid in this case) that they must confront. Something that, on the other hand, is inherent in the patriarchal-bourgeois system that we live in.

Different of what the official discourse of the major media, there will be economic stagnation, since there will also be manifest setback in consumption and private investment, directly connected to the loss of purchasing power of the citizens, just as has been occurring.

The recipes that today are being applied by organisms so profoundly anti-democratic in their

⁴There is a part of public spending which hasn't been reduced, or not as drastically: we are talking about that which is destined to the church, the police, military spending, that of the European royal families.

composition and elections as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) or the European Central Bank (ECB), were already applied in the 70's, 80's and 90's of last century in the countries of Central and South America. The results of those policies are known by everyone: a rise in poverty and social exclusion. Fortunately, the majority of the population of these countries turned their backs to these policies electing in many cases leftist governments in the last decade.

In this line, as a consequence of the economic recession, but also of the measures adopted, the European working class is who is the victim of the ferocious and implacable logic of capital; irrational "logic" that is now translated in the rise in unemployment and poverty and in the cuts in labour rights and social benefits.

The numbers⁵ are emphatic: during the last year unemployment registered in the European Union (EU-27) has went up to 9.8% (10.3% in the Euro zone).

The year 2010 ended with a total of 23,67 millions of unemployed in the EU, of which 16,37 million were located in the Euro zone.

The countries with the lowest unemployment continue to be Austria (4%), Luxembourg (4.9%), Holland (4.9%) and Germany (5.5%). While in the Spanish state (22.9%), Greece (18.8% in September), Lithuania (15.3% in the third trimester) and Latvia (14.8% in the third trimester) continue to be the member states with the largest unemployment.

In this way, the Spanish state doubles the European average and is way ahead and it is far from Austria, the European country with the lowest level.

In November of 2011, the level of youth unemployment was 22.3% in the EU-27 and 21.7% in the Euro zone.

The countries with the highest levels of youth unemployment are the Spanish state (49.6%), Greece (46.6% in September of 2011) and Slovakia (35.1%); while the lowest levels of youth unemployment were in Germany (8.1%), Austria (8.3%) and Holland (8.6%).

The data is also extremely eloquent as for as the level of female unemployment is concerned. In the Europe of the 27, female unemployment reached an average of 10% compared to 9.7% in November of 2010; while in the Spanish state it passed from 20.8% to 23%; that is, more than double the average in Europe.

It is a fact that in times of economic recession in which we live, women and the rest of collectives most subjected to situations of job insecurity (youth, immigrants,...) are those who are the first to lose their jobs, just as the data relative to unemployment demonstrate.

It must be pointed out that there are alternatives to the neoliberal recipes that are being applied, they necessarily pass for an increase in public spending, so as to give incentives to consumer spending and economic growth.

At the same time it isn't understandable that any of those responsible for the crisis have had to res-

⁵Source: Eurostat. November, 2011

pond to their disastrous management; not just that, many of them have been given the presidencies of their countries as has happened with the latest presidents in Greece and Italy.

It is scandalous that, while none of the politicians responsible, nor the administrators of the crisis (bankers, high-level executives...) have had to respond before the justice of the countries of the EU, they are planning now in the Spanish state the possibility of acting legally against public administrators who don't comply with the policy of complete limitation of public and social spending decreed by the PP. That means, while those responsible for the capitalist crisis have gotten away unscathed and strengthened by it, any public official, politician or not, who doesn't go along with the ultraliberal order that they try to impose will be persecuted, a clear example of political authoritarianism.

It is a problem of political will. A clear example in Europe is that of Iceland; the only country in which the majority of the citizens have had the option of speaking out about the economic measures to be adopted after the generalized bankruptcy that the state suffered, the majority of the people voted on two occasions to not pay the debt to foreign banks. Also, in Iceland, they have adopted criminal charges against the directors of the banks and against the former Prime Minister, for their responsibility during the crisis.

3 – THE NATIONAL QUESTION

In the political sphere, the validity of the Right to Self-Determination at an international level must be underscored, including Europe. We also have the example of the creation of the State of South Sudan in 2010.

Equally, the case of Scotland is also especially paradigmatic. The conservative British government has recognized the rights of the Scottish people to freely decide their future. The process of self-determination will be a mirror in which the rest of the nations of Europe that aspire to our sovereignty can look into, being conscious logically of the specificity that resides in every process of national liberation.

It is also a reflection of the crisis of legitimacy that the current states of Europe and the policies of their governments in relation to the nations they subjugate, since their various Peoples, besides the Basque Country, that demand by majority and clearly the respect of their political sovereignty: Catalonia, Greenland, Flanders, etc.

4.-NECESSITY OF A NEW TRADE UNION MODEL AT THE EUROPEAN AND WORLD LEVEL

The current crisis of the system and the offensive that it has carried out against the systems of social protection and against labour and trade union rights has only been possible due to the weakness of the left consistent historically which has fought against the capitalist system. The ideological struggle by the system through the mass media has put in evidence the necessity of a left that is coherent has to reorganize at the European and world level, leaving aside superficial differences.

Equally, the need is obvious to renew and characterize in another way the trade union struggle in Europe, to continue committed to class-based trade unionism that questions the roots of capitalist order and that has a clear socio-political order.

We consider that there are two trade union models in play on our continent:

1 - On the one hand there is the prevailing model in Europe and represented worldwide by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Confederation of Trade Unions (ECTU) on our continent. Evidently, among the trade unions that belong to these confederations there are exceptions, but they are few.

This is a trade union model in crisis and with an important loss in impact and social legitimacy, in spite of being in the majority.

This is a trade union model that doesn't question the roots of the capitalist order, and therefore doesn't plan to overcome it, but tries to give it a "more human face". A trade union model that, in spite of certain clarifications, it has assumed in essence the defence of consumer development, of Euro-imperialism. In this line, it has defended the current model of the EU, even pleading for a favourable vote in the different referendums made to that effect, or has come to justify imperialist aggressions⁶.

What's more, this model has the following characteristics:

- The commitment for the **poorly named "social dialogue"**. This model of "social dialogue" that we suffer in Europe and especially in the Spanish state, is an instrument of different governments to give their antisocial and neoliberal policies a veneer of trade union legitimacy and, therefore, social legitimacy. It is a legitimizing instrument of capitalism. But there is no real dialogue or negotiation, because they don't mobilize in the streets as a legitimate element of pressure, and they enter in a dynamic of sterile reunions which are limited to dressing up the legal projects with contents established by the governments.
- **The very conception of trade union struggle is understood as something isolated, at the margin of other struggles and social movements.** This has made that important segments of the population (youth, women, immigrants, workers in uncertain conditions, the unemployed), not feel identified with this masculine trade unionism, of the industrial sector, and rather old, who also represent an ever decreasing number of the active population.
- Their **dependence on public subsidies** makes them support the policies of the government of the day.

2 - On the other hand, we have the trade union model based on class, confrontation and with an alternative.

It deals with a trade union model very critical with the above and that tries to go building a different trade unionism, transforming and with other references.

This trade union model, of which LAB participates in, is basically (although not only) represented at the international level by the World Federation of Trade Unions and, at the European level, by the European Regional Office of the WFTU, by the Platform of Trade Unions of Nations without State and by the European Platform of Alternative Trade Unions. Equally, a few trade unions belong to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and other small trade unions which are included here. Although it deals with trade unions that have very different origins, currently many of us have a very similar discourse, facing the EU, about the causes of the crisis and how to fight it, and a similar point of view about the challenges of trade unionism. We belong to this group of trade unions who are leading the response to the current crisis in Europe.

⁶The last case is the justification of the European Confederation of Trade Unions, or CCOO and UGT in the Spanish state, to the imperialist aggression in Libya.

The principle signs of identity are:

- Rejection of what today is called "social dialogue", which isn't "dialogue", or "social". The way of defending the rights of the working class and to achieve advances in our demands is the trade union struggle, in the workplace (sphere of collective negotiation) and in the streets. Committing to a trade unionism of struggle and confrontation, for a trade unionism that questions the root of the capitalist order, especially in these moments in the crisis of capitalism.
- Defending a socio-political trade unionism. That means that we understand that the trade union struggle is not, nor cannot, no should be a struggle isolated from the rest of social struggles, it must be an active agent in other social and political struggles. It looks for alliances with other social and popular movements, of youth, women, environmentalists, internationalists, etc.
- It commits to a **trade unionism of equality for men and women.**
- **Financial independence and autonomy from administrations and public institutions.** The source of financing the trade union must come fundamentally through its affiliated members. A clear defence of financial autonomy, understood as being essential to be able to have its own demands and not be controlled by the blackmail of public administrations and institutions.

The challenge for the coming years in European trade unionism is to build bridges among the different class-based European trade unions and to overcome historic divisions and misunderstandings among the trade unions who share the same vision of the reality, with the aim of giving the most coordinated responses possible. It is necessary to create a stable coordination among the trade unions that carry out a radical critique of the capitalist order and the current neoliberal model of European construction.

In spite of the objective difficulties that the trade union struggle is going through in many countries of the European Union, it is necessary to point out that during these past years, there have been important struggles in Europe lead by the most combative trade unions. There we have the examples of the Greek, Italian, French and Portuguese workers that, just as in the Basque working class, have come out on many occasions to the streets to fight against the policies of cuts in workers rights and social spending.

5.- LAB IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: LINES OF ACTION

LAB, as we have pointed out above, will oppose and be an active agent in the struggle against the current system of neoliberal globalization, which gives priority to capital and money instead of the people. In this sense it will work to articulate from the sovereignty of the people and socialism for an alternative to the current capitalist system, which condemns millions of people in Europe and around the world to poverty and social exclusion.

We will fight against privatizations, for gender equality, against the destruction of the environment, for Peoples' Rights and, therefore, against the imposition of the imperialist and neoliberal order which the majority of the governments around the world are imposing. In this sense, we oppose the policies that are being implemented by the IMF, the World Bank, the European Union and the governments of the different states which are part of it, based on the reduction of social spending, in privatizing health care and education, in the deregulation of collective bargaining and the individualization of labour relations, in lowering the costs of firing workers, the reduction of pensions and postponing the age of retirement.

LAB defends the right of self-determination for the Basque Country and for all Nations in the world.

The working class of stateless nations must confront a double oppression, class oppression and national oppression. In this sense, just as up till now, we will continue participating in the Platform of Trade Unions of Nations without States (PSNSE) and we will foster its activities.

Equally, we reaffirm our commitment the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). We share the lines of action approved in the 16th Congress of the WFTU, celebrated in Athens in April of 2011, as well as a class-based and combative trade unionism, whose maximum exponent is in our judgement the World Federation of Trade Unions. Just as the WFTU, LAB considers the struggle against the capitalist order and imperialism to be fundamental at the world level.

LAB will maintain relations with trade unions of the WFTU, and also with other trade unions who, in spite of not being members of the WFTU or the PSNSE, share a similar vision as far as the necessity to struggle for a socio-political trade unionism, class-based and for socialism and for the freedom of Peoples around the world. What is essential for us is the trade union model; in this sense, we defend a trade unionism of struggle, socio-political, and with complete political and financial autonomy.

We believe that in the European trade movement it is urgent to form alliances among all those trade unions who criticize the current process of neoliberal European construction, which attacks the minimum notions of social justice and that seeks to dismantle what little is left of the so-called "Welfare State".

The participation of LAB in the European Regional Office of the WFTU and our relations in the European sphere with other trade unions will have this objective, that of fortifying the class-based trade union movement and an alternative Europe, with the aim of creating a solid alternative to the majority trade unionism of the EU, which has had an active part in the process in the creation of the neoliberal Europe which the working classes suffer from today.

The processes of integration of Central and South America, based on progressive and leftist programs, have a special importance in the judgement of LAB, so that during the coming years we will deepen our relation with progressive trade union centres in Latin America and with the name ESNA ("Trade Union Encounter Our America"), which annually bring together hundreds of trade union organizations from that continent.

Also, **internationalism** is a sign of identity for our trade union. Just as we have been doing these years we will continue to impulse the internationalist struggle, denouncing the assassinations of trade union activists in the countries of the world where this happens, as well as repression against trade unions. We will continue to support the struggle for self-determination of other nations of the world, for example, in the Sahara, Palestine, Kurdistan, Scotland, or Greenland.

The **different federations and sectors of the trade union** must take as their own trade union activity in the international sphere, always under the criteria established at the confederal level.

In each specific case it will be assessed, if appropriate, the suitability of participating in the **European Committees of Businesses**, always with a previous agreement with the trade union section of the affected company.

Basque Country, 2012, June

