

Report by Dimos Koumpouris to the 3rd Congress of the TUI of P&R

Dear colleagues, comrades, participants of our 3rd Congress, dear guests.

We come to the 3rd Congress of our organization having gone through a struggle and action under particularly difficult conditions since our previous congress. A journey that fills us with optimism and reinforces our conviction that the work will be a dynamic process that will provide us with important tools to continue our struggle with greater determination to respond to today's demands.

It is a great honour for the pensioners of Greece that the congressional process, apart from its essential aspect, is being held in our country. On your behalf, we welcome you and wish you strength, health and a pleasant stay in our country.

Progress since our second Congress

Our congress takes place at the normal time after the previous one, which was held in Bogota, Colombia in February 2019 and after the 18th WFTU Congress held in May 2022 in Rome, Italy.

We firmly believe that all our trajectory and actions from our Constituent Congress, held in 2014 in Spain, until today, fully justify the decision of the WFTU to constitute our organization. For our part, we consider the trust received to be a great honour and a great responsibility, we are optimistic, and we will continue more intensively all our efforts to respond to the needs and demands of today's pensioners' movement, in close collaboration with the workers' movement.

Our optimism is not emotional, nor does it express a desire, but comes from our own action over the years through its positive and negative aspects. Mainly from the action of the last few years, after the second Congress of Colombia, where we were forced to act in very difficult and unprecedented circumstances, shaped by the conditions of the pandemic around the world. This problem was made more difficult not only by the impact and rapid spread of the disease, but above all by the response of the governments that managed it. On the one hand, according to the needs of the unjust system of exploitation, the profitability of the pharmaceutical business groups and the private health structures that ensured enormous excessive profits. On the other hand, for the workers, the people, in their eagerness to create conditions of confinement, to stop any voice of protest that demanded solutions and demands to strengthen the public health system, the subordination of the private sector to public needs and the creation of intensive care health structures. This whole period has been a particularly dramatic ordeal for workers, pensioners and the popular strata. Millions of people from the popular strata lost their lives or were left with serious health problems, something that shows that within capitalism even health problems, despite the achievements of

science, cannot be used for the benefit of man by any administration. However, despite the prohibitions and repressive measures, they have not been able to silence the workers' movement, popular movements, trade union movements, and prevent them from developing important struggles together with health workers in many countries of the world.

The economic and social contradictions, the antagonisms of the imperialists are sharpening and impoverishing the peoples, putting world peace in new dangers.

Today's capitalist world is riddled with enormous contradictions, conflicts, wars, poverty, insecurity. Inequalities between countries are widening. The onslaught of capital, of political parties, of governments, regardless of how they politically self-identify, manage and serve their needs, against what the peoples have gained in order to live better, have become the decisive element of their deadly growth, which is the cause of the suffering the peoples of the whole world face.

All the elements show that for the working class and the popular strata the situation is going from bad to worse, since the development of society is carried out on the basis of the needs of capital by the political leaders of the exploitative system. The propaganda campaign of the capitalists that after the counter-revolutionary overthrows in the Soviet Union and in the countries of socialism (the evil empire as they called it), the world would live in prosperity and peace, has, as was certain, fallen into the void, has been belied by events, since today, Thirty-four years after the counterrevolutionary overthrows, the reality for the peoples of the whole world is extremely dramatic and the future uncertain.

Over the years, the exploitation of workers has skyrocketed, rights and wage gains have been shattered, and working hours have increased. Pensioners' incomes and social benefits have been drastically reduced. The greatest conquest of the 20th century, social security, is surrendered to the profitability of capital with a dramatic increase in the retirement age of men and women, with the destruction of pensioners' income, of social security rights. Public health structures have been closed or downsized and privatized, thousands of doctors and nurses are being laid off. Similar is done with the availability of medicines and the existence of public networks of nursing homes.

Companies that produce social goods in energy, water supply, public transport are privatized and given over to brutal exploitation. Free public education is degraded in favor of private enterprise, and structures from pre-school to university to graduate education are given over to profitability.

The land, the beaches, the mountains, virgin forests are handed over to the interests of the exploiters, who have imposed a regime of prohibition of access if you do not pay enough to reach them. Sport develops in the same logic and direction, especially certain popular sports, which have been subjected for years to the profit motive of business

groups, create private armies of fanatical fans through violence, conflicts and lucrative games that yield enormous profits. They place culture in the same logic, degrading it through vulgar programs adapted to the needs of the subculture of the exploitative character of the system.

The prices of popular consumer goods and energy continue to rise, inflation skyrockets, while the real producers of wealth, the workers, are forced to dramatically reduce their purchases.

Taxation for the popular strata becomes unbearable, at a time when the capitalist states use this money to continue strengthening business groups, their growth and profitability, and not to satisfy social-popular needs. At the same time, all civil protection services, firefighting, flood and earthquake protection needs are degrading. The works required in these sectors are not eligible, except for those that bring profits to the business groups. At the same time, the invocation of climate change by governments is an attempt to justify the consequences of natural disasters which, in a cost-benefit logic, deny the allocation of funds for disaster prevention and response, reinforcing mechanisms with technological and human resources. The goal is to continue commercializing the land and its natural resources.

Authoritarianism has grown everywhere, the police state, anti-worker legislation, the obstacles to the action of the workers' movement, to the organization of its struggles and strikes, are reinforced. Everywhere they create huge propaganda mechanisms with hired propagandists, whose aim is to slander the workers' and people's movement in struggle. At the same time, they create and organize fascist and racist groups and parties against the organized class workers' and people's movement and its demands. An important role in this campaign and a helping hand to the aspirations of the exploitative system is played by government and employers' unionism, the so-called yellow unions.

The enormous inequalities of capitalist development between countries and imperialist antagonisms create insurmountable problems of poverty, conflicts, wars that feed migratory flows to the developed capitalist countries, where poverty and misery also acquire enormous dimensions. The unequal distribution of global wealth has widened further in the wake of the international synchronised capitalist crisis. Wealth is increasingly concentrated in fewer hands.

The results of these class inequalities are also reflected in the lack of access of millions of people to food or adequate food, clean water, sanitation facilities, free medical and pharmaceutical care, electricity, and decent housing. One billion people are registered as chronically malnourished, and 4 million children die of hunger every year.

Child labor, the mafia and drug cartels, prostitution, pimping, corruption, illegal adoptions, trafficking in infants, human organs and many others are their creations. In the final analysis, there is no problem whose basis is not to be found in capitalist

growth and profitability. Thus, our movement is not a movement without a compass, but a movement with anti-capitalist-anti-imperialist characteristics and objectives.

One of the most tragic problems that peoples have experienced over the years is imperialist wars. In all these years since the period of the overthrow in the USSR and the other socialist countries, humanity has known the most destructive wars and conflicts around the world such as: in Iraq, Syria, Yugoslavia, Palestine by the murderous state Israel and its NATO allies, conflicts on all continents and now one of the most destructive between Russia and Ukraine after the aggression of the former against the latter. War between peoples who have lived and created wonders together for their prosperity with a huge positive effect on workers and peoples around the world. This particular war is a huge threat to peace around the world, as it is ultimately turning into a war between Russia and NATO, with the help of the reactionary government of Ukraine. But, as has been shown, imperialist peace is also a gun-to-chest process in all countries until the creation of a new war.

These are the gifts of capitalist domination all over the world, on the one hand poverty, misery, exploitation for the workers and peoples, the real producers of wealth, with a huge concentration of super-profits on the other for themselves. This society and its development can have no future. The society that will abolish exploitation, in which the real producer of wealth becomes his own master and satisfies his needs, in terms of objective conditions, is at the door. The preparation of the subjective factor is also our business.

The situation in the world will worsen as the elements of the greatest acuteness are determined by:

- China's strengthening relative to the US and the eurozone, in terms of its share of the Gross World Product. As a result, China's competition with the US is intensifying, and it continues to occupy the top position despite the downward trend in its share.
- The continuation of the retardation of the rate of growth that is creating a new recession of the international capitalist economy, which has been developing in recent years, without any imperialist center being expected to function in a vanguard manner to increase its rate of growth. This has nothing to do with the pandemic that emerged, as the elements of the recession existed before the pandemic and continue after it.
- The great magnitude of the over-accumulation of capital and the weakness of its depreciation satisfactorily controlled by the bourgeois governments in all the imperialist centers.
- The sharpening of the basic contradiction, with the strengthening of the tendency to absolute and relative misery of the working class, first of all in the most developed capitalist economies, with the increase in the degree of exploitation, with new armies of poverty, misery, unemployment.

- The effect of uneven development between different member states of transnational imperialist alliances such as the EU.

More generally, developments confirm that the objective tendency of internationalization of the circulation of capital within the framework of the capitalist market cannot nullify the effect of the law of uneven growth.

The conditions for the expanded reproduction of the capital of monopoly groups, of joint-stock companies, continue to be shaped, for the most part, within the framework of national states and the transnational imperialist alliances in which they participate. The bourgeois nation-state remains the main instrument for guaranteeing the economic domination of capital, monopolies, the concentration and centralization of capital in competition with similar processes and aspirations in other states. It remains a powerful field of the incessant class struggle between labor and capital.

On the basis of this contradictory movement of the capitalist economy, the intra-imperialist contradictions and the intra-bourgeois struggle within each bourgeois state are intensified. In the present period, the bourgeois current of nationalism and protectionism in the economy is temporarily strengthening. The intervention of bourgeois politics to curb a significant depreciation of capital actually delays the entry into a phase of dynamic capitalist recovery and increases the dead ends of the bourgeois political system.

For our part, in our struggle it is necessary to fight together and firmly both bourgeois nationalism and the cosmopolitanism of capital, which constitute the two faces of the ideology of the ruling class, in favor of the international unity of the working class and its movement. The working class and its movement in all countries must prepare for the possibility of a more generalized imperialist war. The war that is unfolding (as we have already mentioned) between Russia and Ukraine and that has become in fact a NATO war against Russia, the alliances and contradictions that are being created, are a global threat.

The acute intra-imperialist antagonisms and the great antagonisms of the powerful capitalist states and interests are today leading to continuous rearrangements of alliances, to continuous phenomena of creation of axes and counter-axes on an international scale.

This situation has led not only to an increase in military spending, but also to a reordering between the capitalist states, in terms of military power, with the use of the army as a border guard (with the Euroarmy under construction) against migratory flows. Huge military forces of the imperialists are deployed all over the world to protect the interests of their business groups, but also to create new conditions that allow them to hoard new sources of wealth, expand their activities.

Thus, in addition to annual military spending, military power refers to the conquered size of military forces over time, technological superiority, the existence of bases outside borders combined with control of territories of strategic importance, superiority in intelligence gathering, the ability to wage an unorthodox war.

Nuclear and biological weapons are of great importance in today's world. The nuclear-weapon states are the United States, Russia, China, India, Great Britain, France, Israel, Pakistan, North Korea and France. However, even among these nuclear powers there are huge differences, with the US and Russia being the most powerful among them. Russia is potentially the only military power that can respond to the U.S. in the event of a nuclear attack, causing devastating destruction. This risk is seen as a deterrent to the use of nuclear weapons.

However, it has been historically demonstrated that in the event of an intensification of intra-imperialist competition and its escalation into a military conflict, the capitalist states do not even hesitate to use such weapons. In short, war is a phenomenon inherent to capitalism, as well as to any exploitative society. Imperialist "peace" prepares the way for new imperialist wars. The cause of world peace is a basic question of the struggle of the peoples of the whole world. It is a question that must be at the forefront of the demands of the working class and its trade unions and of the pensioners' unions, which from their age have themselves lived through bloody wars in many parts of the world.

On this altar, imperialists around the world spend trillions of dollars on weaponry that could meet the needs of the people in health, education, culture, housing, welfare structures, social housing, free transportation, etc. We must make it clear that the class workers' and trade union movement, representing the interests of the working class, of the peoples, has nothing to do with defending the projects of one or another imperialist pole, of the profitability of one or another monopoly group. It is necessary to oppose more resolutely the various nationalist cries of warmongering and the creation of a climate of hostility of one people towards another. To draw a line of struggle in defence of peace that does not divert the defence of borders and sovereign rights – from the point of view of the working class and the popular strata – from the struggle to overthrow the power of capital in each country.

Political-military alliances and confrontations widen and give rise to new oppositions, new demands, and contradictions.

In this direction, each bourgeoisie seeks to increase its power through political-military alliances. NATO remains the strongest political-military alliance, despite the sharpening of contradictions within it and the emerging trend towards the formation of a self-sufficient EU military apparatus. Likewise, both the military confrontations in Europe, Russia, Ukraine, and the strengthening of NATO in the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Balkans are factors that advocate a possible outbreak of wars again on European

soil. Beyond NATO, however, other political-military alliances have emerged (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization, etc.).

At the same time, in several regions, such as Latin America and Africa, political-economic alliances are being formed, linked, among other things, to specific political-military options and partnerships, for example with the EU. In addition, some states in Latin America (such as Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Mexico) and elsewhere (such as Australia) are being integrated into NATO's overall plan to promote "partnerships".

In recent years, mercenary armies, i.e. private military operations, which under various pretexts (e.g., piracy, drug trafficking, military training, "terrorism"), have experienced significant growth. Multinational armies in African countries to seize their wealth. Armies that undertake missions in dozens of war zones as emissaries of the capitalist states. Also interesting are the rearrangements in the BRICS group with the enlargement of the group with 6 more states and others waiting to be admitted, but also with the clashes within the group, mainly with the India-China confrontation.

The purpose of military clashes is to:

- Control of energy deposits and transport routes for energy resources (e.g. oil, gas, pipelines).
- Control of land and sea freight corridors.
- Control of the Arctic's underground riches, mineral riches, rare earths, and water reserves.
- The use of space for military purposes.
- The struggle for market shares, in which the means of warfare are used not only to gain new market shares, but also to reduce the shares of competitors.
- The destruction of infrastructures as a means of domination.

Of course, alongside the fierce competition for the profits of the monopolies, there are also attempts at compromise, agreements, the temporary suspension of any generalization of confrontation and even the reordering of alliances, as shown by the events within the Euro-Atlantic "camp" itself.

The repressive mechanisms against the workers' movement are being updated and modernized.

The debate is intensifying at the level of the EU and all bourgeois states in relation to the so-called "new doctrine of state security". "Security" is presented as the number one issue for the states of the European Union. Behind various pretexts are hidden the aspirations of the bourgeoisie at home (prevention of a possible intensification of the class struggle) and abroad (defence of the interests of the EU and its member states through more active intervention in international conflicts). Characteristically, the German "White Paper on Security" directly links the question of internal security with Germany's desire to strengthen its military role on an international scale, which has equipped itself with an army like Japan's.

The above-mentioned mechanisms and tendencies serve the aim of further shielding the bourgeois states in the context of an intensification of intra-imperialist antagonisms and the possibility of involvement in more generalized conflicts. At the same time, they seek to control the popular layers, restrict people's freedoms and rights through further militarization and reactionarization.

The example of Cuba is typical, where for many years and today the imperialist blockade against this country is turning into an unprecedented genocide against its people who wish to work and live under the social, political and economic system of their own choosing. Our solidarity with this country must be a component of our struggle.

Capitalists have at their service the international mechanisms of capital that play an important, decisive, guiding role in the strategic objectives of capital. This role is played by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and other organisations. The same auxiliary role is played by the International Labour Office for capitalism, aided by the bosses' government unionism, the yellow trade unions which are the only ones in its leadership, and which have enriched themselves by their services to the capitalists.

The class-based trade union movement is the only force that must confront this expanding network of repressive and surveillance mechanisms and the role and aspirations of transnational organizations of capital, reinforcing the regionally and internationally coordinated class struggle. Action against the consequences of the capitalist crisis and imperialist wars is necessary to eradicate the causes that prevent people from living in dignity and security and from becoming homeowners in their own country and must be a key element of the struggle of the pensioners' movement.

The situation of the working class is aggravated by capital's attack on its rights and conquests.

The measures that caused major disruptions in industrial relations, wages, collective agreements, working hours, pensions, social benefits, etc., were planned long before the capitalist crisis. In European countries, the Maastricht Treaty set the direction since the early 1990s. These capitalist restructurings and the associated anti-worker reforms served the objective of facilitating capitalist profitability in a context of intensifying international competition. However, it is understood that its urgency for the capitalist system increases in times of crisis. This strategic planning was promoted selectively, methodically and in the long term by the bourgeois governments of each country.

On this basis, the following are promoted:

A common policy for the drastic reduction of wages and salaries and the promotion of alternative and part-time employment.

The elimination, to a large extent, of the fixed daily working day, tenure in the public-state sector and relatively more stable employment than existed in private sector industries, widespread changes in labour relations, with a reinforcement of flexibility.

These policies are part of the long-term strategy of liberalization of the labor market and the tendency to adjust wages and salaries to the very low levels of the international capitalist market.

A single policy for the contraction of health and social benefits and, above all, for the social security systems with the extension of privatisation, the increase in retirement thresholds with reduced salaries.

New restrictions on the right to strike on trade union action.

Constant increase in indirect taxes, resulting in increases in the prices of popular consumer goods (e.g. electricity, food, transport, etc.).

Passing a series of authoritarian laws that repress and prohibit rallies and demonstrations.

Several elements confirm the tendency to reinforce the absolute impoverishment of the working class. Apart from wage cuts, this drastic reduction in the total remuneration of dependent work naturally reflects the increase in unemployment during the crisis period.

The manifestation of the new and deep international economic crisis and the evident weakness of the public health systems to deal with the pandemic in the imperialist centers show the real character and limits of the capitalist system, despite its dominance after the victory of the counterrevolution of the twentieth century.

The consequences are very great for the working class, the pensioners, the popular strata in all aspects of their lives and, above all, in the protection of their health. The initial bourgeois guarantees and the reassuring declarations of the bourgeois general staffs and governments about a rapid and fulminant recovery from the crisis are contradicting each other. Of course, the pandemic played a role in the timing and depth of the crisis, but it is not the cause of the crisis. The laws of recent years throughout the capitalist world by the bourgeois governments continue to constantly deteriorate the wages, pensions and incomes of the people, the life of the working and popular family.

The strengthening of the pensioners' movement requires a better connection with the workers' movement.

The basic task of the struggle of the people's workers' movement, but also of pensioners who have a special experience, is through class struggles to raise the consciousness of the subjective factor to the level of the present needs for the overthrow of the rotten capitalist system. Prevent the working class, the popular strata from supporting alternative forms of government by alternating between different parties, regardless of how they express themselves or self-identify as right-wing, socialist, social-democratic, left-wing, etc., confusing any kind of differences and statements, which do not escape the management of the capitalist system and its strategic objectives, trapping the workers in their own needs.

It is clear that both the working class and the popular strata, the working class and the working people will not be effective in their struggle for the affirmation of their just demands if they do not have a class framework of demands and alliances between them and, moreover, a clear vision of the field of action of the capitalists. of its strategy, of its potentialities, of its weaknesses, of its contradictions. In simple words, a massive class front united against the class adversary, striking at the weaknesses, omissions, inhibitions and coordination of action that unfortunately exist in our ranks.

In the work of our Congress, we must discuss these important elements, which will determine the evolution of the world in the coming years and, of course, will influence our own work, the objectives we set ourselves and the development of our action.

Today, the very course of the movement, the development of the struggles, the struggle for the reorganization of the trade union movement and the promotion of the social alliance with the social strata affected by the policies imposed by the big business groups is becoming crucial. The problems we have to face, especially within the workers' movement, the people's movement and the pensioners' movement, are to a certain extent in a new phase, as has already been mentioned in the chapter on national and international political and economic developments. The panorama of total retreat, of withdrawal, of generalized insecurity, of fatalism, of fear is well known, we find it in our contacts with the masses. However, there are new pockets of resistance, struggles are developing all over the world. The main conclusion is that there are possibilities, although all objective and subjective difficulties remain. While it is irreplaceable to work on the development of struggles on concrete fronts, it is necessary to address all the problems of pensioners, large and small, regardless of their professional background.

The trade unions (which in some countries are associations of pensioners with class positions, either because of their own history or because of the legislation that prohibits unions belonging to the UIS of the WFTU) have the right, but also the obligation, to act so that all pensioners participate in the organized struggle. The struggle within the trade union movement, of the class forces with the forces of the yellow trade unions, of government trade unionism, in an anti-capitalist line is imperative, it helps and facilitates the understanding that the real visible enemy responsible for the evils experienced by the popular strata is capitalism. This is how we can give a global response to the perspective of the class struggle.

The basic criterion of our work must be to maintain combative links with those who want to resist, regardless of the current level of understanding and acceptance of all our positions. This, of course, does not mean going backwards from the task of highlighting the real causes of the problems, of pointing out the direction of their solution in a well-founded and specific way, which de facto goes in an anti-monopoly-anti-capitalist direction.

It is no coincidence that, along with the economic war for the increase of exploitation, the political and ideological war for the division, manipulation, disorientation and entrapment of the working and popular masses is developing and strengthening at the same time. The forces of the yellow trade unions (with strong financial aid and personal enrichment) contribute to trapping the working and popular masses in points of view convenient to the system, the main vehicle being the conception of class cooperation, the negation of solidarity and class unity. Theories that argue that there is also a healthy capitalist system and that, therefore, with a better combination of policies, things can be fixed.

It is of particular importance today to reveal the character of modern reformism, whose main agent is the forces of opportunism within the trade union movement. Today, the reformist line in the trade union movement has more openly the character of a proposal for the management of the system, while at the same time incorporating demands and objectives of struggle that are fully integrated into the strategy of capital. For example, the content of the slogan of productive reconstruction, put forward in the context of the various transitional programmes, is in fact identical to the objective of capitalist recovery and change of the productive model, despite the fact that it is camouflaged with apparently radical slogans and demands (such as direct democracy, etc.). These are objectives of struggle in the movement that – through their inclusion in various transitional programmes and other types of ostensibly direct political proposals – are exploited to trap them in various versions of bourgeois politics and in the line of governmentalism. Our confrontation with this line in the movement is, therefore, a confrontation with the demands, the objectives, the very leadership of the struggle. The elaboration of each line must have those elements of stability and flexibility that facilitate the disengagement of the radical forces that are adrift and trapped in various proposals for leadership. In this ideological political battle, trade unionists and class organisations, which in the pensioners' movement have experience in this type of situation, must take the initiative.

The need to form a unified idea of the content of the organization of the trade union movement of class pensioners.

It is necessary to understand that, as we have already said, the problems of the life of pensioners throughout the world, however much they form the basis of the struggles that must be developed unceasingly with the pioneering contribution of class trade unionists, do not in themselves lead to the development of political class consciousness. From this derive the tasks of the ideological-political struggle of the class syndicalists within the movement to strengthen its anti-capitalist-anti-imperialist leadership. These tasks include the elaboration of demands for struggle and the choice of forms of organization and alliance with the popular forces first and foremost with the working class, and presuppose a good knowledge of the situation of the pensioners, but also of the new mechanisms and methods of manipulation of the bourgeoisie, which does not

renounce to incorporate the workers' movement into the popular movement in its own strategic choice.

It requires daily friction and training, concern and care on the part of our governing bodies, so that initiative, daily action can emerge. Guidance and creative control are required to form a clear understanding of events. It requires daily and tireless individual work, so that daily links are formed with our members even in periods when no immediate visible results are apparent, which will lead under certain conditions to an increase in the prestige and influence of our class unions, but will also help to build new unions in each country.

It is necessary to acquire a stable orientation and a greater capacity to reinforce from below - starting with the union itself, the place of residence of the pensioners - the line of struggle that focuses on the recovery of losses, combined with the current needs of working families. Ability to project the fact that the obstacle to satisfying contemporary needs and the demands that express them is capitalist property and capitalist profit itself. Ability to reveal in a convincing way – through the struggle that will develop in small and large struggles – the mechanisms of exploitation and, above all, the conditions for their abolition. The ability of class unionists to work with a purpose, a plan and continuity within the world of pensioners, to help organize and bring them together, to clarify things in order to radicalize their consciousness, to raise their capacity for demands and their militancy to respond to their contemporary needs.

It is an objective trend that the current needs are increasing. This is due to the current level of development of the productive forces, the increase in productivity, the achievements of science and its applications in all sectors (health, education, people with disabilities, etc.). They also concern factors related to the standard of living, such as the quality and quantity of food, housing and working conditions, the role of physical education and exercise, health with an emphasis on prevention, the management of environmental problems and occupational diseases, the increase in life expectancy, culture, etc. They also refer to the infrastructures and resources needed to meet them.

Our difference with the yellow unions lies not only in the quantity and quality of the free public social services provided, but it goes beyond that, touching on the very organization and content of these services. Thus, for example, in health, we demand not only better and free health services, but also the priority of prevention and early rehabilitation, or in education, not only free public books at all levels of education, but above all a radically different content of these books, methods and forms of teaching radically different, which aim at the integral education of children.

In all this, taken as a whole, lies the essence of our conception of contemporary popular needs, knowing of course that despite the fact that from now on they must be the object of vindication, their full satisfaction does not "fit" within the framework of capitalism, but presupposes the socialization of the centralized means of production and their integration into the central scientific planning of production. That today we need a

struggle, even if it is for the minimum, linked to the more general struggle, the confrontation with the strategy of capital.

Strengthen our ideological intervention on the women's issue as a key element of women's participation in pensioners' unions.

If we look at women's problems as a whole, we realize that over the past 25 years there has been a growing deterioration of state support for motherhood, intensification of work, instability of working hours, unemployment and, in general, factors that worsen the position of working women and young women. Capitalism and the transnational-imperialist associations, in the name of equal treatment between men and women and the "mixture of family and professional responsibilities", have promoted and continue to promote anti-people and anti-worker measures aimed at eliminating gains and increasing the degree of exploitation of both sexes. Throughout the capitalist world, all governments, under the responsibility of all governments, have used "gender equality" to abolish positive regulations in favor of women, e.g., equal retirement age for women and men, abolition of the prohibition of night work for women, etc. The racial dimension of the women's issue had to do not only with discrimination against women in the context of an exploitative society, but also with the specific social needs of women due to their reproductive role.

Under capitalism, women's relationship to motherhood is exploited to promote reactionary aspirations. For example, it is used as a vehicle to attract women to short-term, low-paid work programmes, to forms of volunteerism that replace the State's responsibility for social services and family support infrastructures (especially for children, the elderly, the disabled, i.e. health, welfare, education, etc.). In the same vein, in the coming period an attempt will be made to integrate women (unemployed, semi-unemployed) into the "social and solidarity economy" sector in terms of intensifying their degree of exploitation and manipulation. At the same time, the prevailing view is that the education and integral development of the child is the individual responsibility of women, a "family responsibility". The problem of lack of free time is aggravated, with negative consequences for information, study and the decision to join the organised class struggle. It becomes even more imperative that our trade unions undertake specialized actions on women of the working class, of popular affiliation or origin, both independently and through the ranks of the workers' movement, with the aim of increasing women's participation. The key is to strengthen women's participation and initiative in our movement.

At the same time, efforts to increase women's participation demand an intensification of the struggle against modern forms of manipulation of women through bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and opportunist views on the causes of women's oppression, i.e., modernized theories of "patriarchal society", "modern masculinity" and new anti-scientific theories of "social gender". These theories are expressed in the appeals of bourgeois politics and its agents (including in the trade union movement) to the need to increase women's participation in a number of institutions, without any reference to

class characteristics, presenting this participation narrowly as an element of competition between men and women. In particular, they present the promotion of women to the management of companies, groups and institutional centres as an element of gender equality. They propose as a measure a quota for women's participation in the "decision-making centres". In practice, for most working-class and rank-and-file women, the right to "vote and be voted for" remains largely formal or, better yet, under the manipulation of capitalist power. Let it be clear that the class-based trade union movement strives firmly to eliminate discrimination against women in all their rights.

Dear colleagues of our 3rd Congress, dear guests,

All these years, the efforts and action that we have developed in our countries, as trade unionists of the workers' movement and members of the WFTU, then as members of the pensioners' movement at the national level before the creation of the WFTU of pensioners and now having the experience and action of the world pensioners' movement give us the opportunity to multiply the steps we have taken. As the difficult times we live in demand. The system of exploitation in which we live and develop our struggle is not eternal and invincible. Its own growth, driven by the profits of business groups, is not its advantage, as its political and capitalist managers proclaim, but its fundamental weakness, its dead end, its destruction. But this cannot be done only because of its difficulties and objective contradictions, if those who suffer its destructive consequences do not rise up, who are and cannot be anything but the real producers of wealth, the working class, the workers, the popular strata of society, all those who have an interest in changing the future of society and in living in a social system without the exploitation of man by man. With socialized means of production without the productive, ethnic, racial, ethnic or other contradictions that the exploitative system creates.

For our part, having now all this experience, as retirees from work but not from the struggle and from life, we must put our own stone into this struggle with all our strength, overcoming any difficulties and problems we encounter in the organization of our struggle. Through the process of our Congress, we will discuss in depth the content, the direction of our action, how to create the conditions for the mass participation of pensioners from all countries in its ranks and how to contribute to the most stable cooperation with the workers' and people's movement.

From our 3rd Congress we send our combative and comradely greetings and a message of optimism to the world working class. To our brothers and sisters of the world class movement. To our fellow cadres of our World Federation of Trade Unions, the WFTU. To our fellow pensioners and trade unionists from all countries who are fighting and to those who are fighting for a society that writes on its flag the abolition of the exploitation of man by man.

Dimos Koumpouris

