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Onderwerp: After the European Parliament elections: let us act to eradicate capitalism

After the European Parliament elections let us act to eradicate capitalism and all forms of oppression

Eric Toussaint - Damien Millet

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The partisans of capitalism, and among them, prominently, the EU leaders, have lost all credibility. For years now they have trampled on the rights of peoples while not wavering when it came to making decisions directly opposed to their advertised principles in order to bail out major banks. European government parties could have acted differently and nationalised the banks, thus retrieving the cost of the bailout on the patrimony of major shareholders and CEOs. The public credit instrument that would have resulted could finance socially useful and environment-friendly projects while guaranteeing individual savings. The crisis has brought back onto the agenda proposals that had been swept aside during the long neoliberal night such as a radical reduction of working time (with creation of jobs and no loss of pay) or indexation of wages and social benefits on the cost of living. Europe needs new financial discipline: company ledgers have to be opened to external and internal auditing (through the trade unions among others), all financial products must be regulated, and it must be forbidden for companies to have assets in any tax haven. Major means of production, trade, finance, communication and other services must be transferred to the public sphere and taken away from capitalists' control. Access to public goods must be systematically promoted.

In a political perspective, European citizens must retrieve the political power that has been taken away from them. The populations who were able to have their say on the Constitutional Treaty turned it down, but leaders ignored their votes without a second thought. Meanwhile Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia show us the way. There, citizens elected a Constituent Assembly in order to draw up a new draft Constitution, which is to be discussed with social movements and sanctioned by referenda. In these three countries voters can now revoke any elected representative mid-mandate, whereas no European Constitution mentions any such highly democratic mechanism.

The countries of Europe must stop plundering the natural resources and know-how of the South. They must increase official development aid, which ought to be called 'contribution to reparations' by way of repairing the historical, social and environmental damage they brought about. Europe must cancel Third World Debt and implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in all its dimensions, including article 13, the right to freedom of movement and residence. Europe must turn away from nuclear power and dismantle all nuclear weapons currently on its territory. Europe must leave NATO and withdraw its troops from all territories under military occupation. Europe must close down all US military bases on its territory. All EU member countries must grant complete independence to populations they still wield colonial power over (the 'French' and 'Dutch' Antilles, British overseas territories, New Caledonia, Reunion Island...). Europe must rescind all partnership agreements with Israel and see to it that the rights of the Palestinian people be at long last respected.

Capitalism has drawn humankind down into a deep multidimensional crisis: it affects the financial sector, the economy, the climate, food and energy supplies, not to mention wars and the arms race. The patriarchal system perpetuates the oppression of women in all areas of life. As asserted at the Women's Assembly at the World Social Forum in Belem on 1 February 2009 : ***We are not interested in palliative answers based on market logic in response to these crises ; this can only lead to perpetuation of the same system. We need to move forward in building alternatives if we are to oppose the capitalist and***

patriarchal system that oppresses and exploits us. [1]

We also support the declaration of indigenous peoples adopted at Belem: *The capitalist development model, a model that is Eurocentric, sexist and racist, is in absolute crisis, and is leading us to the greatest social and environmental crisis in the history of humankind. Structural unemployment is aggravated by the financial, economic, energy and production crisis, along with social exclusion, sexist and racist violence and religious fanaticism. That there should be so many simultaneous crises, and so deep, forebodes an authentic crisis of civilization, a crisis of "capitalist and modern development" that endangers all forms of life. But there are those who continue to dream of improving this model and refuse to acknowledge that what is in crisis is capitalism, Euro-centrism, with its model of a State destined for one culturally homogeneous nationality, western positive rights, developmentalism and the commodification of life.* [2]

Capitalism, patriarchy, and all forms of oppression will not disappear of their own accord: only the conscious and deliberate actions of men and women can yield another system whose goals would be to guarantee indivisible human rights and to protect the environment. We must free our minds of the tragic Stalinist caricature of communism, do away with capitalism, and invent an ecologically viable, socialist and feminist project rooted in the realities of the 21st century.

Notes

[1] In the Declaration of the Women's Assembly http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=4104

[2] <http://www.indigenousportal.com/News/Declaration-of-Indigenous-Peoples-at-the-World-Social-Forum-Bel%C3%A9m-Amazon-Brazil.html>

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