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EU-Crisis and Concrete Alternatives

The need of a progressive European front ¹

The sixth ESF took place at a time when Europe was undergoing existential crisis and where aggressiveness of financial capitalism and the respective governments in the pursuit of their neoliberal logic was leading the societies on to the brink of the abyss.

The present crisis of the Euro and the E.U. — one of the centres of the crisis — is not just the consequence of the worldwide financial collapse. It brings right out into the open the failure of the Euro and the serious defects in the building of Europe, in a way that has been rejected by a majority of the voters during the referenda in France, Holland and Ireland. Neither the E.U. nor the respective governments have observed the decisions of the peoples but, on the contrary, have continued to implement the same trends as before.

The very nature of European integration has turned out to be a crisis factor. The crisis has been fraught with particularly serious consequences in Europe. Even though the intensity and the concrete effects of the crisis are not the same in all the countries, in the North and in the South, the East and the West, the trends are nevertheless identical. The Euro and the E.U. orientations were not designed to stimulate real cooperation in favour of the populations, of a new industrial or agricultural policy, public research, the development of public services and infrastructures, in short, in favour of a new mode of development. The treaties that encouraged fiscal and social dumping, the stability pact (that has been completely exploded) sought to direct the flow of money towards the markets. The whole collection of measures to set wage-earners and regions into competition against each another only help the big business groups, the financial markets and the most competitive economies of the most powerful countries. In fact, the Stability Pact — which is now being permanently violated by most countries of the EU — has burst asunder.

The present-day acute debt crisis is the result of 30 years of economic and political development, of the global financial and economic crisis and of the state intervention that had become necessary in the wake of the acute international financial crisis. It represents a new phase in the great crisis of the entire accumulation and regulation model of finance market capitalism. It is also the consequence of the policy of deregulation which has been practised by right but also by left-wing governments for many decades. The progressive integration of the EU on the basis of the neo-liberal dogma (Lisbon Treaty, Stability Pact, independence and orientation of the ECB...) is responsible for the particular intensity of the crisis in the European dimension.

The debt crisis crystallises a variety of the causes of the crisis and makes the general crisis concretely felt by the people in the countries concerned. In all societies the issue of public debts will become the central issue of social and political conflicts. Under present-day conditions, the great crisis might lead to a crisis of political systems, to a de-legitimisation of political protagonists, to authoritarian solutions. The social situation might become explosive and lead to disruptions of all kinds. Splits inside society may lead to dramatic conflicts between the victims of the crisis and prevent them from forming a joint front against those responsible.

We are at a turning point in the class struggle in Europe. The violence of the methods used by this capitalist front shows its determination. Against them, we need a dynamic social and political front in every country, and to build a common European alternative as answer to human and environmental needs. We need to discuss what political response (see p 2) we propose as concrete and ambitious alternative.

¹ This paper contains large extracts of the article published by the magazine Transform! 06/2010 “Crisis, Europe, Alternatives and strategic challenges for the European Left”,