

Towards the Paris Assembly (October 2010)
Assessments and Proposals

By Franco Russo

1.

The VI European Social Forum, held in Istanbul, has confirmed that the ESF is the only supranational public space, where many subjects – social, unionists, ONG, associative and single representatives of political forces – can meet in order to have a dialogue and to discuss the main world and European issues, and where it is possible to organize campaigns through the use of the networks.

At the same time, the difficulties in order to have a common agenda so as to face the most important problems caused by the policies of the governments and of the social and economic elites are self-evident. They tackle the financial and economic crisis to be able to relaunch the global capitalism through measures which hit society very hard, in particular the working classes, youths, migrants. In fact, wages, pensions, the permanent casualization of work, the cutting of social services are the immediate effects of the ‘sound’ public budgets and of the pressure of global competitiveness; at the same time the ‘deficit spending’ policy has been used to bailout the banks and the financial institution. Judith Delheim has described the situation in these terms :«Today we are confronted with the effects of crises on conditions of human life - from financial to economic crises, long-term structural crises as well as food, environmental and energy crises of the global crisis of reproduction. The rulers of our society and of the world are processing these crises in a way that deepens global and social divisions and comes nowhere near addressing ecological exigencies and often even contradicts them. Above all it is dominion over the global South that is to be deepened and the European East that is to be pacified and controlled at a discriminatory social minimum level».

2.

The premises of the crisis have been ‘the frightened worker’ and ‘the indebted consumer’, as by the Italian economist Riccardo Bellofiore wrote. Now, the worker is even more frightened and the consumer becomes poorer, because the public money is utilized by the governments to support the banks and the financial system. The budget policy helps the enterprises and aims at safeguarding the ‘sheets’ of the banks, and at the same time public services are being reduced. In the firms and on the labour market, workers are under pressure to make new sacrifices in order to raise their competitiveness on the global market and are pushed one against the other (the situation of the Fiat workers in Pomigliano is a clear example of this).

Therefore we should engage in a battle against these governmental and entrepreneurial policies to change the composition and goals of the budget and to contrast the cut of the wages and the worsening of the labour conditions.

Another budget is possible to face the ecological and social crisis (Elisabeth Gauthier). Commons (climate, water, energy, earth), people revenues (wages, basic income, pensions), social rights are the centre of a possible alternative agenda, which should also have the perspective of public ownership of the banks and democratic control of the BCE.

3.

Until now we have not been able to set and implement our agenda. We are not able to articulate campaigns and struggles in order to contrast the capitalist and governmental policies. Also in the last ESF we were not able to set forth a common agenda, and the different assemblies were not in the condition to elaborate a common strategy.

In fact, the leap from ‘words to actions’ has not been made at a European level. The networks suffer from a ‘word-disease’, in that we meet in order to organise other meetings to organise other meetings...It is not by chance that the only appointment launched in Istanbul was September 29 (and the days around that date), sponsored by the ETUC – and not discussed inside the ESF process.

4.

The network ‘Charter of another Europe’ has been one of the ESF networks, which has been very useful when we faced the Constitutional Treaty, to support the struggles against the signature of the Treaty by the governments. The *Charter of principles* has been a paper which has synthesised some important common values around which it would have been possible to organize campaigns - peace and peoples’ rights, citizenship by residence, worker and social rights, commons, individual and collective rights to build a European constitutional democracy... -, but furthermore, the Charter network has not been able to articulate the general issues into specific proposals, around which we should have built ‘reinforced coalitions’.

Now, in my opinion, it is time to experiment the building of these ‘reinforced coalitions’ to set and pursue the altermondialiste’ agenda by specifying programs, timetables, forces (organised in coalitions) which can realise them.

The Charter network, in my opinion, can promote some of these programs, and specifically:

1. the European citizenship by residence, which implies civil, social and political rights for all (native and non-native people);
2. worker and social rights (to fight the social dumping and to try and raise wages all over Europe; to grant the union democracy so that workers can decide on labour agreements; to institute the basic income to fight casualization; to grant health, education, pensions for all...);
3. social management of the commons (climate, water, energy, agriculture and territory management), as the axis of the new sustainable economy and of the new public democracy;
4. public ownership of the banks and of the BCE so as to grant their democratic control
5. a European public budget to support the building of a socially just and ecologically sustainable society.

I think that it is possible to discuss and elaborate *common programs* in the ESF, as a European public space, and to organise *different coalitions* to implement them.

Franco Russo