



NO ILLUSIONS, SOCIALIST CONVICTIONS

The last months of European politics seem to have given way to less austerity in the speeches. The « balance of power » is changing in Europe with different progressive victories, and left wing governments in Europe which resist the pressure of the markets and implement progressive policies. The financial transaction tax is under way. But the announcement of a new « pact for growth and jobs » at the June European Council and the recent announcements of the European Central Bank to guarantee states' obligations must not fool us. The fiscal compact was adopted in most countries of the eurozone and will be applied ; the European Central Bank will only buy states' obligations on the secondary market, subjected to the State being in an extremely difficult position under strict conditions of reduction of public spending and implementing « structural reforms » which we know are always a pretext for dismantling social protection and public services and pressuring workers wages down.

Austerity policies have continued and worsened in European countries : in Spain new drastic cuts have been announced in September, student fees are being raised while scholarships are cut. In Portugal pensions and states' agents' salaries are being reduced. In the meantime, taxation in direction of luxuries are diminished. In Greece, the extend of successive austerity measures are leading to social chaos. Markets keep dominating countries of the south of Europe. This imbalance of power enables conservative governments of Europe to direct other countries towards austerity and to implement « technical » cabinet. We need politicians who believe that the primary competence should be the political one instead of believing technicians and scientists take political decisions.

Let us keep in mind the neoliberals have provoked the crisis and are using its devastating consequences on public spending and employment to push their aims through. There is no crisis of public spending, it is a crisis of neoliberalism and financial capitalism. The European commission and the European council are not apolitical : they are following and pushing an ideological agenda through : reducing public spending as much as possible in order to spread market logics to the largest area possible.

The situation of the youth is getting worse and worse. The unemployment rate is increasing and warm words from the EU are not enough. The illusion of a softer austerity should not fool us into thinking we are on the right path, and recent decisions at the EU level prove it. A few weeks ago the Commission suggested the Erasmus programme, which is perceived by the youth as one of the only positive aspects of the EU, may not get sufficient funding for the next seasons to function properly. Simultaneously, once again, the European Food Aid Programme is threatened in the next EU budget. No need to say it would be a tragedy in a period where everyday more people in Europe fall in extreme poverty and rely on the precious help food aid associations can provide them. The Commission confirms its lack of ambition for the EU when its President Jose Manuel Barroso suggests to dedicate part of the Financial Transaction Tax's income to reducing States' contribution to EU budget.

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Thus our ambition cannot be to “fit out” capitalism in Europe. Our ambition cannot be to sprinkle the EU with limited social measures or to negotiate the terms of the social regression. Our ambition must be to overcome capitalism and its endless consumerism and present an alternative ideological project so as to be able to confront the right at the EU level. We need to build a strong manifesto to put forward left-wing policies in Europe. A reflationary policy through public spending is the only way out of the crisis, through a public works policy and the ecological transition we cannot ignore any longer. But the condition for this policy to be possible is for the European Central Bank to be able to lend directly to states so as to break the pressure of financial markets on states’ budgets. Top oriented fiscal and social harmonization are also essential conditions for the EU to be a space of solidarity instead of a field for competition for nations and people. In order to improve the ecological quality of the goods we consume, and to guarantee the sustainability of our high level of social protection we need to protect the European industry. It is an imperative so as to make Europe a new model of development, with low carbon emissions and enough jobs for everyone. Of course, the question of democracy must be at the center of our requests as it is a condition for peoples to master their destiny. Federalism is only worth it if it is a choice of the citizens.

The emergence of a political project relies on a context: that of the next national elections, in Germany, Italy, Austria, Czech and Cyprus and of the 2014 European elections. As a generation victim of the crisis, and aware of the necessity for peoples of Europe to get closer in solidarity, we believe we are legitimate to express a critical view on achievements of the EU and its current underlying liberal ideology. Socialists cannot afford to lose the next European elections, as the people of Europe would dramatically suffer from it.

But we will only win the elections if our project is clearly alternative, and a path towards a democratic, social and ecological Europe. We must be consistent with these positions before, during and after the campaign. By choosing to present an exclusive candidate for the EU commission in 2014, the Party of European Socialist is going the appropriate way. We cannot wait and should develop a true European activism. As socialists our role is to carry the aspirations of social movements and civil society groups against austerity, as they are more and more numerous to mobilize at the European level. As workers are being laid out everywhere in Europe, we need to participate in social mobilizations led by trade unions so as to show our support and willingness to build a social Europe. It is our only chance to break the EU’s neoliberal logics and make an alternative Europe a reality.