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European Anti-Capitalist Left declaration

After the 'No' vote in France and in Holland

- News from around the world -

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The undemocratic European Union has suffered a powerful blow from European peoples. French and Dutch peoples have rejected massively the European Constitutional Treaty after a broad and democratic debate despite of the fact that all the main parties, institutional forces, centres of economical power and mainstream media were in favour of the Constitution.

All the pro-yes forces are now trying to depreciate popular votes, just as they tried to do it before the referendum. The no vote is presented as a narrow minded, fearful, chauvinistic and xenophobe vote. And, at the same time, the vote in favour of the EU Constitution is supposed to be open, friendly, ambitious and modern.

[<http://internationalviewpoint.org/local/cache-vignettes/L305xH261/agauche-057cb.jpg>]

What has really happened - and has surprised all the mainstream thinkers - is quite different. French and Dutch voters have not reject Europe, peaceful relationships between people, "Polish plumbers" or anything like that. They have reject the damages of "free market and competition", the increase of military expenses, the subordination to NATO, the attacks against public services, the growth of unemployment and the casualisation of work.

They have reject all the neo-liberal policies implemented since twenty-five years by right wing or center left wing governments for the benefit of bosses and shareholders.

The question raised by the EU Constitution was not for or against Europe. But what kind of Europe people want to live in! And how to build it? And the answer is now very clear. People want another Europe that the one that has been built through Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties and that the EU Constitution wanted to promote.

Another way, often used, to disqualify the vote of French and Dutch citizen is to explain that when people say no, they were answering another question that the issue of EU Constitution. If fact, they are supposed to have said no to theirs unpopular governments. Actually, this is partially right. But why were these governments so unpopular?

The main reason is that their political approaches are very unpopular... and closely linked to EU politics and directives. People have made no mistake. They say no : no to EU politics; and no to theirs governments. Because these issues are very similar. However we also recognize that part of the No vote was fuelled by racism and xenophobia and that this must be combatted in Europe.

Three conclusions must be drawn. The first one is that the governments that have been disavowed are now lacking of any legitimacy. The second one is that the European Commission is also lacking of any democratic and popular legitimacy. This is not new; but it is now obvious. The third conclusion is that the Constitution must be considered as dead and has to be buried immediately.

Different studies and opinions polls lead to the same conclusion: the no vote was a working class vote. In France, 80% of industrial workers voted no; 60% of employees voted no, including 65 % of civil servants; 71% of unemployed and casual workers voted no. Another study states that the majority of people with an average monthly revenue under 3000 Euros voted no, while a majority of those earning more than 3000 Euros a month voted yes.

In the Netherlands, which held its first referendum in 200 years, all the main political parties, including the Dutch Labour Party, the trade unions, the media, and all the bourgeois institutions argued for a Yes vote only to be defeated by a massive 62% to 38%, an even bigger majority than in France.

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The radical Dutch Socialist Party was the only substantial party to argue for a No vote.

The same class polarisation took place in the Netherlands as in France. In the poor districts of Amsterdam the no vote was crushing. In Amsterdam Noord 73% voted No. In Volewijck and Buiksloterham the No vote scored a massive 79%.

In both countries, the prospect of an upturn in struggle is now likely to follow. In the Netherlands, following the referendum, 15,000 local government workers attended a demonstration. On that day they took strike action, as part of their campaign for higher wages. It was a much higher turnout than the trade union leaders expected.

But the votes of French and Dutch people are not only "class votes" based on social issues. They are also the sign of a democratic upsurge against the bureaucratic building of EU. They are a protest against the opacity of the writing of the Constitution Draft by co-opted Convention chaired by Giscard D'Estaing. They are a protest against the fact that 16 over 25 European people have been denied the right to give their opinion about the Constitutional Treaty.

Alike with the people, the organisations, parties and movements of the European Anti Capitalist Left have and are still campaigning against this Europe and its Constitution. Because this Europe means more attacks against social rights, more privatisations and destructions of public services, more legislation in favour of the rich and the powerful, more military expenses and less democracy.

In order to smash the Constitutional treaty and the neo-liberal policies that go with it, democratic struggles in the countries where a referendum is organised are important. But social movement and direct action of labour movement is also required. That means that any attempt to reintroduce Bolkestein's directive must be opposed as well as the directive Draft about the duration of work.

It also means fighting to defend and develop public services. The Europe we want must recognize women's rights including free access to abortion and equal wages. The Europe we are fighting for will recognize freedom of movement and equal rights for all men and women in the field of the democratic, social and trade-unionist rights, including the right to vote for citizens of a third country residing in a member state, and a new open policy on the issue of asylum seekers.

The rejection of the neo-liberal constitution in many ways parallels tremendous movement against neo-liberalism in Bolivia and resistance of Chavez and the bolivarian movement in Venezuela. We understand that these struggles are not separate but in many ways the same.

We are for a Europe of peace against the militarisation of the European Union and the NATO Alliance. We call for the immediate ending of the US lead occupation of Iraq and the NATO occupations in Afghanistan and the Balkans.

We say "No" to this Europe because we are fighting for a socialist, democratic society, self-managed from below, without exploitation at work or oppression of women, founded on sustainable development. And we are ready to co-operate with any parties and movements of the European Left in order to achieve these goals. That are the reasons why we are involved in the processes of European Social Forum and G8 Alternatives Summit.

Signed by

Bloco de Esquerda (Portugal)

Esquerra Unida i Alternativa, (Catalunya)

Espacio Alternativo (Spain)

Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (France)

Red/Green Alliance (Denmark)

Respect (Great Britain)

Scottish Socialist Party (Scotland)

Socialist Party (England and Wales)

Socialist Workers Party (Great Britain)

SolidaritéS (Switzerland)

*Holyrood, the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh
Friday, 1 July 2005*