

Is another Europe possible?*

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The slogan which dominated the proceedings of the recent annual meeting of the European Social Forum (ESF) in Athens “another, social and peaceful, Europe is possible”, although being more concrete than the usual vague slogan of the World Social Forum (WSF) – “another world is possible” – was no less utopian. The Declaration of the ESF^[1] stresses that:

We reject this neo-liberal Europe and any efforts to re-launch the rejected Constitutional Treaty; we are fighting for another Europe, a feminist, ecological, open Europe, a Europe of peace, social justice, sustainable life, food, sovereignty and solidarity, respecting minority rights and the self-determination of peoples.

However, this ‘other’ Europe is not, in fact, located beyond the present neoliberal Europe, despite the ESF’s statements to the contrary, given that nowhere in the text of its latest (or previous) Declarations is there any questioning of the European Union itself, which functions as the main instrument of capitalist neoliberal globalisation! It is merely the present neoliberal character of the EU which is criticised, presumably because it is considered to be some kind of dismissible defect and not a systemic characteristic of the internationalised market economy – of which the main expression in Europe is the European Union! No wonder that the luminaries of the reformist Left in the Forum (Tariq Ali, Alex Callinikos, Noam Chomsky and the rest) have never given an explanation as to why on earth no social democratic or centre-left government, from Mitterrand to Lafontaine, has ever succeeded in reversing the neoliberal course of privatisations, tax cuts (for the rich) and the consequent semi-privatisation and dilapidation of the welfare state, flexible labour markets and so on. Thus, neoliberalism and wars, for the ESF, are just the ‘bad policies’ of ‘sold out’ centre-left parties—despite the fact that several of those parties directly or indirectly support the Social Forum!

The foundation stone of the ESF ideology is the myth^[2] that capitalist neoliberal globalisation is not a one-way street. Last year’s “Call to the social movements” of Porto Alegre explicitly criticised the ‘lie’ that neoliberal domination was unavoidable. But capitalist neoliberal globalization is, indeed, a one-way street in the system of open and deregulated markets for capital and commodities imposed by the dynamics of the market economy, which have led to today’s huge concentration of economic power. Correspondingly, the dynamics of representative ‘democracy’, since it was established about two centuries ago, have led to the present concentration of political power at the hands of the political elites and, mainly, at the hands of the transnational elite. Therefore, this year’s Declaration by the Athens conference of the ESF, as well as the previous Declarations of the ESF and the WSF, simply express the stand of the international reformist Left, namely of the Left which does not question the very system of the capitalist

market economy and of representative ‘democracy’ – despite the fact that it is the system itself which is the ultimate cause of neoliberalism, war and the broader multi-dimensional crisis.^[3]

Furthermore, the ESF mythology is also contradictory since, on the one hand, it declares that “This year has been significant in that a number of social struggles and campaigns have been successful in stopping neoliberal projects such as the proposed European Constitution Treaty, the EU Ports Directive, and the CPE in France”, whereas, at the same time, it admits that “Although the EU is one of the richest areas of the world, tens of millions of people are living in poverty, either because of mass unemployment or the casualization of labour (as a result of) the policies of the EU based on the unending extension of competition within and outside Europe”. However, mass unemployment and casualization of labour are not God’s curse, but symptoms of capitalist neoliberal globalisation. Clearly, neoliberal globalisation did not require the ratification of a European Constitution since, as was stated elsewhere,^[4] the EU constitution would not have affected the present character of the EU in the slightest, having been determined by the existing Treaties that established the EU in the first place (Single Act, Maastricht, Amsterdam etc). The only significance of the Constitution – had it not been rejected by the French people – would have, therefore, been that it would have constitutionalised the existing neoliberal character of the EU in order to frustrate any future attempt to reverse it by “sett(ing) in stone the diktats of free trade and establish(ing) the rule of the market once and for all”, as an analyst^[5] put it. It is, therefore, clear that the French “non” to the neoliberal constitution (of which a new version is already being discussed among the European elites!) , as well as the frustrated attempt by the French elite to introduce the Anglo-American kind of legislation of ‘hire and fire at will’ for young people^[6] – or, ‘flexible’ labour relations, as neoliberals euphemistically call it – (which is bound to be resurrected by the French elite some time in the future if it wants to survive international competition), do not constitute any indications that neoliberal globalisation is reversible within the present system, as the reformist Left deceitfully argues.

Similarly, the Declaration states that “Opposition and resistance to the war and occupation of Iraq have exposed the British and US strategy as a failure. The world is facing the nightmare of a new war in Iran”. However, it is clear that the anti-war demonstrations of the supporters of the Social Forums are not, in the slightest, influencing the aggressive plans of the transnational elite and its European component against the Iranian regime.^[7] Even much bigger demonstrations by millions of people all over the world did not have any effect in stopping the barbarous invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention the attack against Yugoslavia which succeeded in dismantling the country, to the enthusiastic acclaim of several supporters of the Social Forums!^[8] Finally, as another article in this issue of the Newsletter shows, the conclusion of the ESF Declaration that “Important political changes have materialized in Latin American countries that have shaken the neo-liberal offensive, and in some of them popular mobilizations managed to reverse the privatization process”, is more a pious wish of the reformist Left than a real fact.

It should also be mentioned that, if some older Forum demonstrations were successful in making the life of the elites more difficult at various G8 meetings etc, this was not due to the ‘happenings, cheerful festivals and peaceful marches of Forum supporters but, on the contrary, to the militant acts of the radical elements of the antiglobalisation movement

(which were condemned by the supporters of the Forum!), that consequently attracted the wrath of the elites. In the Athens conference of the Forum, for instance, this led to the indictment of several activists on serious charges that may attract heavy penalties from the criminal courts.

It is, therefore, clear that the aggregate of trends, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) etc that forms the ESF and the WSF not only fails to constitute a ‘movement’^[9], but it does not have any significant influence either in the struggle against capitalist neoliberal globalisation or even in the struggle to stop the criminal wars of the transnational elites. The very facts that the transnational elite not only ignored the anti-war activities of the Social Forum but is also planning a new attack against Iran, whilst the Zionist elite –tolerated, if not supported, by the EU – sweeps on towards the creation of a Bantustan in Palestine, are characteristic indications. However, all this does not mean that the various libertarian anti-Forums offer a kind of way out. Although their main slogan in Athens, “No other world is possible as long as there is a state and capitalism” was, of course, correct, they do not manage to unite and agitate all those who clearly see the bankruptcy of the reformist Left. This is clearly because the demand for the replacement of the existing system is not enough by itself (particularly after the failure of ‘actually existing socialism’, which led many to believe that the existing system was non-replaceable), unless it is accompanied by a new political project and strategy that will lead to the development of a new mass anti-systemic movement for a genuine new world. Instead, the domination of postmodern trends in the libertarian movement (see, for example, the American Institute of Anarchist Studies), or of irrational or primitivist trends, makes sure that the libertarian movement also shares in the phasing out of the traditional antisystemic movements.^[10]

* The above text is based on a translation of an article which was first published in the fortnightly column of Takis Fotopoulos in the mass circulation Athens daily *Eleftherotypia* on 13/5/2006

[1] [“Declaration of the assembly of the movements of the 4th European Social Forum”](#), (Athens: May 7, 2006).

[2] T. Fotopoulos, [The Multidimensional crisis and Inclusive Democracy](#) (2005) chs 3-4.

[3] Ibid. ch. 9.

[4] See [“The European Constitution and the Left”](#), *Newsletter* #13 (25 April 2005).

[5] Bernard Cassen, ‘Europe: no is not a disaster’, *Le Monde diplomatique* (April 2005).

[6] See [“France: The revolt of the victims of neoliberal globalisation”](#), *Newsletter* #29 (3 April 2006).

[7] See [“Iran: The next target of the translational elite”](#), *Newsletter* #31 (3 May 2006).

[8] See T. Fotopoulos, “The First War of the Internationalised Market Economy”, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (July 1999).

[9] See T. Fotopoulos “Globalisation, the reformist Left and the Anti-Globalisation ‘Movement’”, *Democracy & Nature*, vol. 7 no. 2, July 2001

[10] See [“The End of Traditional Antisystemic Movements and the Need for A New Type of Antisystemic Movement Today”](#), *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2001).