

Should East-Europeans praise the beatification of John Paul II?

Tuesday 3 May 2011, by [European Feminist Initiative \(Poland\)](#), [Hungarian Social Forum SR](#), [STARNAWSKI Marcin](#) (Date first published: 1 May 2011).

The publication of a statement in the name of the Hungarian Social Forum SR praising the beatification of John Paul II called for vigorous answers, especially from Polish feminist movements.

Hungarian Social Forum SR over the beatification of John Paul II

In a Press Release published on Saturday the Hungarian Social Forum-Social Roundtable has told that with John Paul II will be beatified a Pope who has indicated the Humanity future in a "Democratic Society imbued with Social Justice". It is symbolic, that the beatification of Karol Wojtyla happens on the Workers feast. In fact he has emphasized the priority of the Job over the Capital, considering the last a tool for the dign existence. The Wage must be sufficient to assure the life of the Worker and his Family, and also to grant them economy. The voice of the Pope died six years ago has been cried in the wilderness in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe, so in Hungary, where the livelihood is an every day problem of 6 millions on ten, and the Right to Job has been omitted from the text of the new Constitution - communique is writing. HSF SR cites some ideas of John Paul II from Centesimus Annus, regarding the State Responsibility to the working majority of the Societies, the Social Needs which cannot be subordinated to the market logic, the exploitation, and the social limits of the private ownership. Finally it tells: HSF SR remains respectfully to the memory of this man, who has preached after the collapse of real socialism, that neither capitalism would resolve the problems of Human kind, and that "The way of the Church is the way of the Man".

(endre simó)

30th April 2011

To Hungarian Social Forum SR

We would like to express our astonishment at the statement of the HSF SR on the beatification of John Paul II. While it is difficult not to agree with your opinion that the choice of the date for this ceremony is not accidental, our assessment of this fact is quite different. We think this shows the will of the Church to appropriate the control over the working class movement and to destroy the tradition of the International Workers Day, commemorating the massacre of the workers in Chicago

in 1886.

This same Church, who participated in the oppression of the working class as well in Hungary as in other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe before the World War II, and who benefited the most from the so-called democratic transition in the post-communist countries, now is pretending to defend the interests of the workers. We are very disappointed to find that the Hungarian Social Forum SR is supportive of the slogan "The way of the Church is the way of the Man". Women, who have been discriminated by the Church for centuries, gained their rights in a tough fight. Now, under political pressure of the Church, they are losing their fundamental rights, i.e. the right of woman to dispose of her own body. The way of Church is not the way of Woman. We will invite our feminist friends and partners in the feminist struggle to express their opinion on the subject.

European Feminist Initiative in Poland

Dear Simo Endre,

First of all, you should understand specific predicament of specific social groups vis-a-vis certain institutions in particular countries. Such is the case of women's struggle in Poland against the power and domination of the Roman Catholic church. And it is not only women (or feminist women) who raise their voices against this patriarchal-sexist, anti-social, anti-emancipatory, pro-war, pro-capitalist and highly elitist and exclusivist (in quite a feudal style) force lead by very privileged men whose legitimisation comes from the Vatican. This is our perspective in Poland and if you respect internationalist principles, please consider expressing more empathy towards those whose particular perspective in a given national or cultural context is different than yours. And you should know that many de facto Catholics in Poland share such critical views regarding the Church's destructive role and they more and more often reject, however silently, their Church's position in social and political life, media, education, family policy, intrusion into people's personal lives etc.

Second, I understand how religion or faith or ethics inspired by religious laws/texts/traditions can fuel social struggles. This was the case with (mainly Latin American) liberation theology, a radical leftist movement of Catholics (including lay men and women as well as clergy) for emancipation from exploitation, neocolonialism and injustice. That movement was eliminated precisely by the very same pope whose beatification is being celebrated these days. Please search for more critical account of John Paul II's geopolitical involvement and how he was responsible for smashing liberation theology and pushing it remains actually out of the Church. All in the name of "anti-communist" struggle - which placed out of context of anti-bureaucratic struggles in Eastern Europe and implanted in Latin America against radical Left could only take form of anti-communist obsession in favor of Ronald Reagan's reactionary anti-socialist backlash.

Thirdly, that the pope expressed some criticism on war, inequalities, racism and so on - we know that very well. But this is not (a) something that we on the Left or in social movements aren't doing on a daily basis, (b) something that necessarily reverses all reactionary policies of the Catholic Church and (c) something that would change the very power structure of the Church itself and of the institutional setting (or overlapping of the Church with ideological institutions of the State, Education or Media and the Church's privileged position in the present system of economic relations). Far from it! At least this is the way the situation in my country, Poland, could be described. And last but not least, in the Polish case, the media hype about beatification is by no means the matter of a moral revival, but it is an embarrassing and vulgar spectacle of nationalist

madness (as John Paul II has often been described as the “Polish pope” and, curiously enough, some journalists have actually presented the beatification as vital for the Polish state [sic!]).

Concluding, we should respect and secure the rights of believers and enter into dialogue with those religious ideas that might inspire many in the struggle for a better future. But we should resist power of those who cynically exploit believers’ good faith to do no much more than pursue their economic, political and ideological interests.

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