

European Left Party - First Congress in Athens

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The first congress of the European Left Party took place in Athens on October 29-30. About 500 delegates and observers were present. The LCR was there with observer status, represented by Alain Krivine. This report of the congress appeared in the LCR weekly, Rouge of 3 November. (IV On line).

The congress of the European Left Party (ELP) was chaired by Fausto Bertinotti of the Italian PRC. The congress initially aimed at bringing together, in a flexible structure, all the European communist parties, whatever their differences. Since the disappearance of the USSR and the East European bloc, all that had existed between them were bilateral contacts, and sometimes some one-off conferences.

The construction of Europe, with all its political and social repercussions, pushed towards the constitution of this party. Only a small number of communist parties, among those who are most nostalgic for Stalinism, refused to come to Athens, denouncing the "revisionist and reformist" nature of the enterprise. This was the case with some East European parties and with the Portuguese and Greek CPs. Overall, the congress was dominated by a desire for consensus, not touching, either in the debates or in the final resolutions, on the issues that posed problems, in particular questions of strategy.

On the level of generalities, the documents that were adopted correctly denounced the capitalist offensive in Europe and defended social mobilizations. On the other hand, there was not a word on the crucial problems of what means to employ to "change Europe", in particular the problem of alliances and of governmental participation. The decision by the majority of the PRC to be ready to enter a government led by the liberal Romano Prodi was on everyone's mind, but it did appear in any of the interventions, except the one from a representative of the "left" of the PRC. In reality, the theses of the ELP are more akin to those of a united front than of a party.

In this climate, a real spirit of openness towards all progressive forces dominated, in particular in the delegation of the PCF. It is in this context that our comrade Alain Krivine was invited, and that he intervened in the name of the LCR, to remind delegates that there also existed a Conference of the European Anti-capitalist Left and that we were ready to conduct joint campaigns, but also to engage in debates, in particular on the strategic questions of programmatic content and of alliances. In fact several parties, such as the Left Bloc in Portugal, the ODP in Turkey and Respect in Britain, are members of both regroupments.

So there was a big change in the atmosphere, when we recall that during the founding conference of the ELP, held in Rome eighteen months ago, the organizers had refused to invite the LCR. Since then, there has been the 'No' campaign in France and the new unitary dynamic. So the PCF also had invited to Athens, Raoul Marc Jennar, Yves Salesse [1] and representatives of Mars, Alternative citoyenne and PRS. [2] For its part, the PDS in Germany had invited Oskar Lafontaine. So there are

two regroupments in Europe and a single enemy: the bosses. There really is room for unity of action and for debates.

NOTES

[1] Raoul Marc Jennar organizes Unity of Research, Education and Information on Globalization (Urfig). Yves Salesse is president of the Fondation Copernic, a left-wing think tank. Both were actively involved in the French “No” campaign.

[2] Mars (Movement for a Republican and Citizens’ Alternative) and Alternative citoyen (Citizens’ Alternative) are two small political organizations who took part in the “No” campaign, as did PRS (“For a Social Republic”), a left current in the French Socialist Party, whose best-known leader is Jean-Luc Melenchon.

P.S.

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