

The difficult relationship between the left and the European Union

The treaties of Rome 1957-2007

We just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. 1957 was the beginning of a fascinating period that led to the European Union, a single currency, free movement of goods and capital and, partially, free movement of persons and services.

Those who favour the European unification process say that it allowed us to preserve peace in a continent that had only known wars. They point to the internal solidarity mechanisms that helped the poorer regions. Thanks to European help, they now have development and prosperity. The desire to link one's own wagon to the European locomotive is even said to have accelerated the transition from dictatorship to democracy in some countries. Constantly, we are reminded of the fact that the single European space and the single currency are creating more wealth...

Nevertheless...

This European happiness is not shared by all. How else should we explain the 'non' and 'neen' vote against the draft European constitutional treaty? Europe is perceived as a Brussels Moloch, business that cannot interest the ordinary man in the street. He/she does not know what is decided in Brussels and, at any rate, he/she has no voice. Working class people see the European Union and its internal market as a threat to social rights and public services, more than as a source of wealth and welfare. There is a feeling that 'Brussels' has too much power and that decisions are not taken at the adequate level.

Nevertheless ...

Europe is constantly presented as a project of peace, of international cooperation, of solidarity and prosperity. These are the values of the left, whereas the left does not love Europe...

Why?

This international conference of Masereelfonds, Vrede (peace movement) and Imavo (Institute for Marxist Research) will try to find the answers to these questions. Why does the left not like this Europe?

Brussels, VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), 5th of May, 9.30 am to 17.30 pm, room Qc, 1050 Brussels. There will be simultaneous translation in French, Dutch and English.

Programme:

10.00 am Welcome by **Jan Stacino**, vice director of Masereelfonds

10.05 Europe as seen by **Turhan Kayaoglu** (Turkey), author and journalist;
Turhan Kayaoglu is an economist and political scientist. Chief editor of *Demokrat* until the coup of 1980. Lived in exile in Sweden where he worked at the main Swedish newspaper. Wrote several books and translated some others from Swedish in Turkish and v.v.

11.15

The European Union and democracy, **Hilary Wainwright**

Hilary Wainwright is chief editor of Red Pepper. She is a honorary fellow of the Sociology department at Manchester University and member of the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam. Her research concerns transnational democracy and labour relations. She is active in the antiglobalisation movement and is a member of the International Council of the World Social Forum.

Debaters:

Pierre Galand, socialist member of the Senate. Has long worked for Belgian NGOs. Is chairman of the Centre laïque, chairman of the Belgian Friends of the *Monde Diplomatique*, and the Belgo-Palestinian Association.

Lode Van Outrive, former member of the European parliament (socialist group), member of the Board of Masereelfonds, former chairman of the League for Human Rights; retired professor of the University of Leuven.

Moderator: **Francine Mestrum**, member of the Board of Masereelfonds, lecturer Université Libre de Bruxelles, author of several books on globalisation and poverty; has worked for 30 years within the European institutions.

12.30

Lunch

13.00

The European Union and subsidiarity: what about civil liberties? **Tony Bunyan**

Tony Bunyan is founder and director of Statewatch, an NGO with a specific expertise in civil liberties, democracy and transparency of the European Union. Statewatch does research on matters of asylum and migration, police cooperation, protection of personal data, racism and xenophobia.

Debaters:

Eric Coryn, philosopher and social scientist, professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Research on participatory democracy and urban governance. Founder of Charta 91.

Herman Michiel, trade unionist BBTK (socialist trade union); author of a book on the European constitution and translator of *Manifeste pour une autre Europe*, written by Yves Salesse. Works in the Europe group of the Committee for Other Politics.

Moderator: **Frank Slegers**, European Marches for Work and Belgian Social Forum

14.45

Coffee

15.00 *The European Union and social policies, Yves Salesse*

Yves Salesse is member of the French Conseil d'Etat, former professor of European law, member of Fondation Copernic, a think tank that co-organised the European Social Forum in Paris. Author of various texts and books on Europe.

Debaters:

Carlos Polenus, former secretary general of the socialist trade union BBTK, where he worked on European policies. Works for the new international Confederation of Trade Unions.

Anne Van Lancker, member of the European Parliament (socialist group), member of the Convention that prepared the European Constitution. Chairman of Zij-kant, the socialist women's organisation.

Moderator: **Georges Spriet**, coordinator of Vrede (peace movement).

16.15 Informal gathering of speakers and participants.