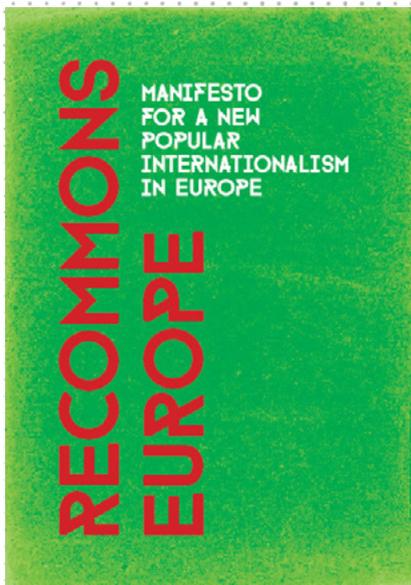


RECOMMONS

IMPACT OF
EUROPEAN POLICIES
ON THE GLOBAL
SOUTH AND POSSIBLE
ALTERNATIVES

EUROPE



ReCommonsEurope was initiated by two international networks, the CADTM and EReNSEP, and the Basque trade union ELA, in order to contribute to the strategic debates taking place within the European popular Left today. It was written in one year by sixteen people active in six different countries (Belgium, Bosnia, France, Greece, the Spanish State, and the United Kingdom); the authors are active in different organisations and movements (trade unions, political parties, activist movements) and bring together diverse and complementary expertise (economics,

political science, philosophy, anthropology, law, ecology, unionism, feminism, North/South solidarity, and so on). Three generations are represented. The Manifesto is supported by more than 160 signatories from 21 different European countries, among whom a majority of women.

The manifesto is available here : www.cadtm.org/Manifesto-for-a-new-popular-internationalism-in-Europe

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FORE- WORD

The year 2020 was marked by two events that revealed, once again, the limits of the capitalist system. First, the CoViD-19 pandemic caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, responsible for the deaths of several hundred thousand people and counting, highlighted the vulnerability of human societies in the absence of adequately funded public health services. It also served to highlight which activities are essential to the existence of human societies. Second, the pandemic precipitated the greatest economic crisis since the 1930s. By revealing the fragility of societies where exchanges are extremely rapid and production chains are internationalized, the pandemic also revealed the most irrational aspects of the economic system that governs and structures social relations in almost all parts of the world. Thus, capitalism appears to

be incapable not only of providing for basic human needs but also of reproducing its own functioning. All governments that initially try to protect both the law of profit and their citizens' lives inevitably find themselves tempted to defend the former against the latter.

The neoliberal structural adjustment policies which have been pursued for decades have played an important role in increasing inequality and, ultimately, in the way the epidemic has spread. Contrary to widespread belief, the epidemic does indeed differentiate between origins and social classes, affecting in particular those at the bottom of the social ladder. It has also particularly affected countries that, on the pretext of maintaining strict fiscal discipline, have given up – or have been prevented from – building an efficient and accessible health care system.

Thus, while many countries in the Global North are experiencing the harmful consequences of the privatizations and budget cuts that have been applied in recent decades, the countries of the South are for the most part prevented from developing efficient health care systems because of the heavy burden of debt on their public accounts.

In the European Union, the crisis has again been marked by an inability of Member States to coordinate their responses and develop common strategies. While the small island nation of Cuba – which has been subjected to a US blockade for 60 years – sent medical teams to more than 20 countries including Italy, which was hard hit by the pandemic (this is in line with Cuba’s policy of international solidarity, as recently demonstrated in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake or in Africa against the Ebola virus),

the policies of EU Member States in this area have been more than timid if not non-existent. No stockpiles of masks or medical equipment had been jointly agreed on in the EU. No European medical team was formed. The national retrenchment sought by the extreme right-wing forces scored a point when the various governments closed their borders (in a very disorderly manner). Only after months of prevarication do Eurozone Member States seem to have reluctantly agreed to pool a small share of their sovereign debt – a decision that the stronger states will surely make the weaker ones pay for by continuing the fierce competition that characterizes the Economic and Monetary Union.

When it came to defending the interests of the capitalist class and their companies, on the other hand, the Member States of the EU, like

the other countries of the Global North, were all able to develop a similar political orientation aimed, as in the case of the bank bailouts that took place from 2008 onwards, at socializing the losses of large companies (with no guarantee that jobs would be maintained) by injecting vast amounts of public money into them. In order to do this, the EU Member States did not hesitate to abandon the dogma of fiscal and budgetary discipline on the basis of which Greece and other countries on the European periphery had been designated as “bad pupils” and forced to adopt severe austerity measures during the previous crisis. European governments are thus once again agreeing to increase their public debt in order to help big capital and thus make the people pay for the crisis.

The specific impact of the CoViD-19 pandemic in the countries of the Global South is a striking example of the accentuation of inequalities between different regions of the world. It is a situation in which the European Union and many European States have a major responsibility, because of past and present policies towards these countries of the Global South. Any

force aspiring to break with the dominant capitalist order on the European continent must act to put an end to the exploitation of the peoples of the Global South.

The present work is the fruit of the ReCommonsEurope project, which we have been carrying on within the Citizens for Financial Justice consortium since 2019. Previously, from 2018 onwards, this project engaged the CADTM, in collaboration with the European Research Network on Social and Economic Policy (EReNSEP) and the Basque trade union Eusko Langileen Alkartasuna (ELA), in a project aimed at fuelling the debate on the measures that a popular government in Europe should prioritize. **The present work is relevant for all social movements, peoples and political movements that seek a radical change in favour of the 99%.** In line with our commitment to develop concrete proposals for dealing with immediate problems, we have chosen to call this project “Impact of European policies on the Global South and possible alternatives.”

With this second phase, we seek to define a set of clear proposals that a

popular government should implement in order to bring about real and profound change in the unjust relations between European states and the peoples of the Global South. To this end, we are engaged in a process of elaborating texts, based on joint work between activists, politicians and researchers from countries of the Global South and Global North. This work concerns the following areas: debts claimed by countries of the Global North – in particular European countries – from countries of the Global South; free trade agreements; migration and border management policies; militarism, the arms trade and wars; and reparation policies with regard to the spoliation of cultural property. In this brochure, in order to set out a general framework, we take up and adapt the chapter on international relations from the Manifesto for a New Popular Internationalism in Europe¹ signed in 2019 by more than 160 people from 21 European countries. This manifesto was published in four languages (French, Castilian Spanish, English and Serbo-Croatian).

It presents the most urgent measures concerning the following issues: money, banks, debt, labour and social rights, the energy transition in order to build eco-socialism, women's rights, health and education, as well as more broadly international politics and the need to promote constituent processes.

More than ever, we believe that it is essential to fuel and develop debate on alternatives to a system that increasingly shows its incompatibility with such a fundamental right as the right to lead a life of dignity.

1 Available at: <https://www.cadtm.org/In-the-times-of-the-coronavirus-a-look-back-to-the-Manifesto-for-a-new-popular>



REFUGEES
WELCOME

CHAPTER 1

Relations between the Global North – in particular European countries – and the Global South: A general framework

Even before the beginning of the CoViD-19 pandemic and the international economic crisis which it helped to worsen, countries of the Global South had long been facing a striking weakness of their human development, recurrent crises in food production, an increased dependency on exporting primary commodities, a lack of public services and the dramatic effects of the environmental crisis.¹ Nearly two billion people

suffer from malnutrition, most of them living in the Global South. Half the world lacks access to essential health services. In the absence of a radical break away from the international policies deployed by the powers of the Global North (including the European Union and its Member States) towards these countries, as well as from the social

often maintain close relationships with each other as well, as they have similar living standards, whether they find themselves in the Global North or in the Global South. The toiling classes both in the Global North and in the Global South are exploited by the capitalist classes from the Global North and the Global South. See CADTM: “South/North, Developing Countries/Developed Countries – What is it all about?”, [cadtm.org](https://www.cadtm.org/South-North-Developing-Countries-Developed-Countries-What-is-it-all-about), 11 February 2020. URL: <https://www.cadtm.org/South-North-Developing-Countries-Developed-Countries-What-is-it-all-about>

¹ Of course, both categories of “Global North” and “Global South” cover various social realities. There is a “South” in the Global North. ReCommonsEurope thus develops an analysis based on the existence of unequal relations between the dominant economies and the peripheral countries within the EU. Furthermore, countries both in the Global North and in the Global South are divided along class lines – and the ruling classes

and economic policies implemented by the ruling classes in countries of the Global South, the situation is likely to worsen dangerously under the combined effects of the health crisis, the economic crisis and the environmental crisis.

The populations of the Global South are also the most affected by forced displacement. By the end of 2019, according to the figures of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 79.5 million people had been forced to flee their homes because of war and persecution – an increase of 11 million compared to the figures from 2017. Out of this total, 45.7 million people were displaced inside their own country, 4.2 million were awaiting the outcome of their application for refugee status and 26 million were refugees outside their own country. The United Nations have now added to these figures 3.6 million Venezuelans displaced abroad while not fitting into any of the previous categories and living in particularly precarious conditions.² Apart from displaced Venezuelans, many of whom had to leave their country for economic reasons, these figures generally do not include people fleeing misery and the consequences of climate

change, whose numbers will most probably rise in the near future.

In the EU, most of the ruling classes as well as the rising far Right forces assert that massive flows of refugees have been reaching the continent since 2015. The widespread use of the term “refugee crisis” suggests the same. While the flows of migrants seeking asylum in the EU have indeed grown since 2015, in particular as a result of the war in Syria, the arrival of around one and a half million people in an area of more than 510 million inhabitants can in no way be characterized as a crisis for Europe. The EU hosts a small minority of the total number of refugees worldwide, while “developing countries” host 85% of them.³ In the case of Syria for instance, most of the refugees are hosted in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Furthermore, such assertions hide the actual response of the EU to this situation, which has been to strengthen its “Fortress Europe” policies.

The opening of the EU’s internal borders through the Schengen Agreement (which applies to 22 of the 28 Member States of the EU as well as to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Andorra,

2 See: UNHCR, *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2019*.

3 *Ibid.*

Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican) was accompanied by a strengthening of the EU's external borders. Freedom of movement was granted to Schengen area nationals only, while reaching the EU (that is, the Schengen area) was made more complicated for poorer, non-Schengen nationals, in particular for populations from the Global South.

Through the Dublin Convention, the EU reproduced in the area of border control the absence of solidarity between Member States that prevails in its economic policies. Indeed, the Dublin Convention “stipulates that refugees seeking asylum within the EU must submit their papers in the country through which they entered, and must remain there until their request has been examined. Failing this, the applicant is liable to be returned to that country, or ‘Dublinized’, so becoming an outcast shunted from one country to another,”⁴ thus requiring the “frontline” countries of the Schengen area (in particular Greece and Italy, but also the Spanish State) to do the dirty work of keeping migrants out of the EU. This was accompanied by the establishment of a border control agency for the EU, Frontex, whose an-

nual budget increased from around €6 million in 2005 to around €143 million in 2015 and more than €330 million in 2019.⁵ In recent years, the means for repression of migration have also constantly increased within the Member States themselves, with the generalisation of detention centres for migrants, the use of new technology to patrol borders, and the construction of walls and fences to prevent migrants from crossing borders (e. g. Ceuta, Calais).

What's more, the EU establishes “compacts with other states or agencies, outsourcing functions of coercion, detention, surveillance and control. By these means, a good number of the non-member states along the Mediterranean coast and beyond have been transformed into buffer zones and thus annexed as an outer ring of the EU's border defences.”⁶ The most important of these external gatekeepers, however, are Turkey and Libya, which stand at the head of the two main routes of informal migration to the EU: that from Africa, which is mainly funnelled through Libya and across the central Mediterranean to Italy; and that from Asia and the Middle East via Turkey

4 Stathis Kouvelakis, “Borderland. Greece and the EU's Southern Question”, *New Left Review*, No. 110, March-April 2018.

5 Frontex, Key Documents. URL: <https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/key-documents/> (Accessed 19 July 2020)

6 Stathis Kouvelakis, “Borderland”, *op. cit.*

to the Balkans or the easternmost islands of Greece.”⁷ In 2015, the EU’s Valletta Summit on Migration agreed on funding the detention centres of Libya, which for a few days in November 2017 became notorious when CNN released video footage showing a “slave auction” happening in one of those centres. The same summit agreed to spend \$2 billion in “development funds” to strengthen border control in Sudan, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal. In March 2016, another infamous agreement was signed between the EU and Turkey, through which “Turkey agreed it would prevent ‘irregular’ crossings from its coast, in return for an EU promise to lift visa restrictions on Turkish nationals and open a new round of accession negotiations, along with €3 billion to assist the settlement of refugees on Turkish soil.”⁸ The crisis that erupted in March 2020 between Greece and Turkey when Ankara decided to stop respecting the agreement and allow crossings from its coasts showed how the agreement had been used as a means of political pressure (Turkey then sought to silence EU criticism of its invasion of

Kurdish territories north of Syria) and testified to its inhuman character.⁹

Such policies are not just morally wrong: they have transformed the Mediterranean Sea into a mass grave; at least 19,803 people died trying to cross it to reach Europe between January 2014 and December 2019.¹⁰ Stathis Kouvelakis convincingly argues that the fortifications which were set up over recent years to prevent migrants from coming to the EU are responsible for this tragedy; he also shows that, since the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement, “while the monthly death rate fell, that per arrival keeps rising, doubling since 2016.”¹¹

This is all the more unacceptable since Europe bears an overwhelming material and moral responsibility in the situations leading hundreds of thousands of people to leave their countries. The colonial past of the main European powers, which was a structural element of capital accumulation in Europe,

7 Stathis Kouvelakis, “Borderland”, *op. cit.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 See CADTM, “Crisis on the Greece-Turkey border: let’s have done with Fortress Europe”, [cadtm.org](http://www.cadtm.org), 7 mars 2020. URL: <http://www.cadtm.org/Crisis-on-the-Greece-Turkish-Border-let-s-have-done-with-Fortress-Europe>

10 See International Organization for Migration, Missing Migrants Project. URL: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int> (Accessed 19 July 2020)

11 See Stathis Kouvelakis, “Borderland”, *op. cit.*



disintegrated the social fabric of colonised territories and replaced it with a violent relationship of dependency on the colonial rulers. Since dominated nations formally achieved independence after having had to fight for it for decades, colonialism turned into neo-colonialism – the direct subjugation of formerly colonised nations being turned into an indirect subjugation, in which the violence was made less visible but the dependency on the most industrialised capitalist centres remained. The obstacles to self-determination, therefore, remained as well.

Neo-colonialism can be characterised by a broad set of policies, among which we could highlight:

- **The implementation, with the help of the local dominant classes, of a permanent system of indebtedness** of subjugated nations towards external bilateral (dominant States), multilateral (IMF, World Bank and other financial agencies) or private (banks, investment funds, vulture funds) creditors. This debt system has enabled the continued plundering of national assets of those debtor states in favour of the most industrialised countries. Once these subjugated nations defaulted on the payment of their debts, the system helped impose neoliberal policies of the

Washington Consensus: the creditors offered the debtor states new loans and/or momentary debt relief for them to continue their reimbursements, on condition that these debtor states privatise key sectors of the economy, remove trade tariffs, adopt floating exchange rates and variable interest rates, decrease their public spending in social sectors, and more generally decrease their public investment. These policies make the dependent states even more vulnerable to international competition with the most industrialised countries, prevent them from investing in the productive sectors of the economy and in public services, destroy the remaining local and self-organised economies and thus condemn the populations to a permanent state of precariousness and poverty.¹²

- **The implementation of free-trade rules and agreements** pushed for by the EU and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which favour the most industrially developed nations and encourage the development of export-led economic models (e. g. the Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States). Sub-

jugated nations thus privilege the development of one or a few economic sectors for exportation, which impinges on their food sovereignty and self-sustainability. Export-led economic models also encourage the race for competitiveness through the lowering of wages and/or the worsening of working conditions.

- **Political, financial and material support for corrupt and authoritarian leaders** as a way to maintain the economic interests of the most industrialised states and multinational companies. A striking example of political support: Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak and Bashar al-Assad all received the French Legion of Honour, the highest French decoration. When the uprising broke out in Tunisia in December 2010, France offered Ben Ali its savoir-faire in terms of repression of demonstrations. Similarly, Egypt and Saudi Arabia – two states whose regimes are heavily involved in the current Middle-Eastern geopolitical chaos – have been reliable buyers of French and British heavy weapons over recent years.

¹² See for instance Éric Toussaint, *Your Money or Your Life. The Tyranny of Global Finance*, Chicago, Haymarket, 2005.

- Direct interference in the politics of dominated nations through economic and financial blackmail, support to coups or direct military intervention, whenever the economic interests of European nations are threatened.¹³

For the forces of the social and political Left aiming to build popular governments that break with capitalism in Europe, it is essential to put an end to these policies of domination over countries of the Global South and to replace them with policies based on cooperation and solidarity.

13 Regarding the policies of direct interference and of support to corrupt, authoritarian leaders pursued by France in several African countries, see (in French) the important work of the association Survie: <https://survie.org>.

CHAPTER 2

Abolition of illegitimate and odious claims by European countries from third parties, giving absolute priority to human rights

The coronavirus pandemic is a serious public-health problem and the human suffering caused by the spread of this virus is enormous. Under the pretext of necessary fiscal austerity to repay public debt, governments and major multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and regional banks such as the African Development Bank have everywhere enforced policies that have deteriorated public health sys-

tems: job cuts in the health sector, precarious employment contracts, reduction of hospital beds, closure of local health centres, increase of health care costs and of prices of medicines, under-investment in infrastructure and equipment, privatization of various health sectors, under-investment by the public sector in research and development of treatments for the benefit of the interests of large private pharmaceutical groups...



This is true in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and in the countries of the former Eastern bloc (Russia and other former republics of the former USSR, Central and Eastern Europe). Nevertheless, this obviously also concerns developed economies.

It is very urgent to suspend debt payments and to use the sums thus released to meet the needs of the populations and to protect them.

It must be stressed that the effects of the economic and health crisis will be particularly noticeable in the countries of the Global South. Not only are these countries in a weakened position to cope with the epidemic and its economic conse-

quences, but also the fall in the prices of raw materials will multiply the cost of borrowing for these countries. Markets for raw-material exports are shrinking, leading to job losses. Migrant remittances are decreasing as many have lost their jobs or seen their incomes decline. In addition, private financial companies in the North are withdrawing the purely financial investments they had made in the Global South (especially in the stock markets), thus causing a significant repatriation of capital to the North.

In this chapter, we analyse the impact of European financial policies on the peoples of the South and make a series of proposals in this regard.

Since 1980, the countries of the South¹ have repaid 18 times what they owed in 1980, but at the same time their level of debt has increased more than 12-fold. Between 2000 and 2018, the public external debt of the countries of the South more than doubled from US\$1,300 billion to nearly US\$3 trillion.² A new debt crisis has already begun in about ten countries according to IMF data.

However, contrary to the generally accepted idea that countries of the North aid countries of the South, an analysis of all North-South financial flows shows that for every 1 euro sent from countries of the North to countries of the South (via Foreign Direct Investment – FDI, Official Development Assistance – ODA, portfolio investment, private aid and other official flows), 3 euros go the other way (debt servicing, profits repatriated by investors, capital flight, ill-gotten assets and other illicit financial flows). This is a real “debt system” which keeps the countries of the South dependent on the so-called developed countries.

1 By countries of the South, we mean all low- and middle-income countries as defined by the World Bank. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/income-level/low-and-middle-income?view=chart>

2 Based on data available on the World Bank website as of 8 September 2019.

The system begins with bilateral debts. Despite a strong lack of transparency in these accounts, as far as bilateral claims are concerned, according to World Bank data, the public external debt of the countries of the South amounts to nearly US\$3 trillion. The bilateral share of this debt is estimated at US\$437.9 billion, i.e. almost 15%.

Beyond bilateral debt, EU countries can also exert influence on countries of the South through the European Investment Bank (EIB). The credits granted by the EIB are marked by characteristics that are contrary to the interests of the people: lack of transparency leading to corruption, embezzlement and over-invoicing, aid tied to European companies in order to favour the profits of their major shareholders, failing environmental standards and promotion of economic spin-offs for private corporations both from the Global North and the Global South to the detriment of the fight against poverty.

At the European level, it should be stressed that monetary policy is not without consequences for the peoples of the South. In response to the outbreak of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, the European Central Bank (ECB) implemented a policy

of quantitative easing (QE). Beyond the highly questionable effects of this policy in Europe, QE caused a massive influx of capital from EU countries to countries of the South. In search of profitable investments, large amounts of cash were poured into these countries. European investors rushed into bond issues from Southern countries because they were more remunerative than bonds issued by Northern governments. These bonds are obviously riskier. Moreover, large purchases of bonds from the South lead to a sharp increase in the debt of the countries that issue them, taking it to unsustainable levels. As a new debt crisis spreads, these highly speculative and volatile financial flows contribute more to destabilizing the economies of these countries than to strengthening them.

Neoliberal policies (in particular structural adjustment policies from the 1980s onwards) have increased the number of poor people in countries of the South. The global financial institutions, led by the World Bank, are promoting “financial inclusion” to accelerate the integration of this population into the market economy.

For hundreds of millions of extremely poor people, “financial inclusion” actually means that they

will become easy prey for lenders, whether through microcredit agencies or traditional loan sharks. Neoliberal attacks on public services (schools, hospitals) and the precariousness of paid employment further accentuate monetary needs, especially for women single parents. Capitalist microcredit institutions sponsored by major international institutions such as the World Bank and the EIB are multiplying under the guise of fighting poverty, and are making large profits on the backs of the poorest sectors of the population by imposing abusive conditions and usurious rates. Microcredit agencies, which include subsidiaries of large private banks such as BNP Paribas and Santander, claim to have almost 100 million clients worldwide, almost 80% of whom are women. Despite the media campaign in its favour, the record of microcredit over the last thirty years has been clearly shown to be quite negative.

The solutions to be found to fight against poverty do not consist in indebting the poor via the market but in significantly increasing their income by guaranteeing them sufficiently high prices for their products (farming and fishing products in particular), decent wages, stable jobs, access to free public education and health services and access to

credit via public bodies or co-operatives lending at zero or very low rates.

The fight against abusive microcredit must be linked with the great battle against public debt.

On the other hand, we must not forget the so-called Official Development Assistance (ODA), which generally serves to maintain relations of domination between countries. Aid that is “conditioned” by the application of neoliberal policies such as – to give but a few examples – cuts in public spending that degrade the quality of health and education services; decreasing civil service employment; reduced public aid to small local producers; making workers more precarious; privatization; controlling borders and migration to strengthen Fortress Europe. All these conditions are defined by the major governments of the North and the World Bank/IMF twosome. The aid is granted through three channels: multilateral aid, bilateral aid and NGOs. In addition, a number of expenditures counted as ODA are completely questionable or downright odious because they never reach the populations they are supposed to benefit: they are used, for example, for the detention of asylum seekers or other restrictive migration policies applied

within the territory of EU countries. Some of the sums included in ODA are the result of a pure play on words. For example, bad debts are written off and accounted for as if they were a donation, while no funds are actually granted to the country concerned.

As in Northern countries, one of the preferred means of fostering private sector involvement is the promotion of public-private partnerships (PPPs). Formerly financed by governments, the financing and realization of infrastructure, goods and services are entrusted to the private sector... Public authorities are becoming more and more indebted to the private sector. Large private public-works companies become owners of new infrastructure and then lease it to the public authorities. These public-private partnerships (PPPs) are characterized by a lack of transparency in tendering and accounting, over-invoicing by private companies, non-compliance with the standards in force, lack of public consultation and benefits for the population, leasing contracts lasting several decades at the expense of public authorities, and so on. PPPs must be rejected!

Finally, we must not forget that European states are part of international institutions that go beyond the

European framework: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), and even the African Development Bank for some European states, especially former colonial metropolises. This is also the case for the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Investment Bank for Infrastructure (AIIB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The European states bear a heavy responsibility for the harmful policies they pursue.

Considering 1. the anti-democratic character of these institutions, 2. the flagrant contradictions between the IMF's structural adjustment plans and several international human rights treaties, 3. the responsibility of these institutions for the outbreak of the Third World debt crisis in 1980, 4. the past and present financing of despotic or dictatorial regimes by the IMF and World Bank, the debts claimed by the World Bank and IMF from the countries of the South must be recognized as illegitimate and/or odious. Despite the hegemony of the United States in these two institutions since their creation, by virtue of the voting rights of EU countries (or groups

of countries presided over by an EU country),³ the latter also have a clear responsibility for the level of indebtedness of the countries of the South⁴ and for the negative consequences of the policies pursued there.

3 For the World Bank, Germany (3.93 per cent), France and the United Kingdom (3.68 per cent each) hold 11.29 per cent of the voting rights. If the groups of countries chaired by Austria (4.75 per cent), the Netherlands (4.11 per cent), Italy (3.37 per cent) and Iceland (3.03 per cent) are added, their voting rights reach 26.55 per cent. See: <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/329671541106474760/IBRDEdsVoting-Table.pdf> For the IMF, Germany (5.32 per cent), France and the United Kingdom (4.03 per cent each) account for 13.38 per cent of the voting rights. If the groups of countries chaired by Austria (3.23 per cent), the Netherlands (5.43 per cent), Italy (4.13 per cent) and Iceland (3.29 per cent) are added, their voting power reaches 29.46 per cent. See: <https://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/memdir/eds.aspx>

4 One example is the MENA region's debts recognized as odious by the European Parliament. On the odious debts of the MENA region: Resolution of 10 May 2012, paragraph 6: "considers the external public debt of the countries of North Africa and the Middle East to be odious given that it has been accumulated by dictatorial regimes, mainly through the personal enrichment of the political and economic elites." See: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2012-0201&language=FR&ring=A7-2012-0104

In conclusion, European governments, as accomplices of large European private companies, both historically and because of their political, economic, military or financial weight on the world stage, have a huge responsibility for the injustices suffered by the peoples of the South. This responsibility is both of a **bilateral nature**, resulting from the former empires, the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism, specific free trade agreements, interloping networks like “Fran-

çafrique,” etc. and through their own actions; and also of a **multilateral nature**: continental free trade agreements, Eurafrica, fiscal regulations, EU countries’ membership and voting rights in international financial institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, the European Investment Bank or EIB, the WTO, the Group of 7/20 (G7/20), the Paris Club, the OECD, etc. and representations on the UN Security Council, etc.

No one is illegal



RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to cancel the illegitimate and odious debts claimed from third countries and thus promote sovereign, solidarity-based and self-centred forms of development of the countries of the South, the governments of European countries should, without any form of interference, undertake to:

- Strictly respect the primacy of human rights over all other rights;
- Oppose the systematic promotion of the private sector to finance the development of countries of the South, and in particular oppose the promotion of Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs).
- Cancel their support for the abusive microcredit system and its institutions, favouring their replacement by genuine cooperatives managed by local populations and by a public credit service granting loans at zero or very low interest rates;
- Put an end to neoliberal policies and the privatization of public services;
- Repeal a series of international, multilateral and/or bilateral treaties (economic, commercial, political, military, etc.) that are contrary to the exercise of the full sovereignty of the States of the South and to the interests of the peoples of the South and, more broadly, to the general interest of humanity;
- Leave the international institutions and other informal groups that in essence feed North/South asymmetries, including the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, the Paris Club, the G7 and the G20;
- Leave regional development banks outside their borders, including the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank;

- Call for and join countries of the South in the creation of alternative multilateral international institutions that are democratic (on the principle of one country = one vote), equitable and under popular control. This means contributing to the creation of new international institutions that respect human rights and nature and to the in-depth reform of the United Nations Organization, in particular by putting an end to the right of veto in the Security Council. The in-depth reform must also concern certain specialized UN agencies that have become captive to the “partnership” with private foundations that promote PPPs, microcredit, the market at large, free trade and so on;
- Support the implementation of citizen audits on their own territory in order to cancel debts claimed from third countries that have been identified as illegal, unsustainable, illegitimate and/or odious;
- Launch a vast audit programme with citizen participation to highlight all forms of spoliation and exploitation of the peoples of the South;
- Impose heavy fines on companies that have plundered the peoples of the South in various ways in order to contribute financially to a special aid and compensation fund;
- Finance the countries of the South, excluding Official Development Assistance, by means of zero-interest loans, repayable in whole or in part in the currency desired by the debtor;
- Make available to the populations of the countries of the South, through their associations/autonomous organizations, all documents, including those classified as “defence secret,” that can shed light on the origin of the debts claimed by various creditors;
- Regularly make public all claims against third parties in an easily accessible and comprehensible form;
- Expropriate “ill-gotten goods” from the rulers and ruling classes of the South and return them to the populations concerned and under their control;

- Put an end to Official Development Assistance in its current form, as it is essentially an instrument of domination for the almost exclusive benefit of the countries of the North and replace it with an unconditional “Contribution of reparation and solidarity” in the form of grants, excluding in its calculation debt cancellations and amounts that do not serve the interests of the populations of the South. This contribution must correspond to at least 1% of the gross national income of the most industrialized countries;
- Issue an official public apology for all the wrongdoings committed by European powers towards the populations of the South, entitling them to reparations;
- Affirm the right to reparations and/or compensation to peoples who were victims of colonial plunder and spoliation through the debt mechanism;
- Acknowledge the ecological debt of industrialized countries to the countries of the South and make reparations and/or compensation by recovering the cost of these expenses through a tax or fines levied on the large companies responsible for pollution;
- Prohibit companies from speculating on the resources and production of the countries of the South;
- Heavily punish companies guilty of any form of corruption of public officials of the countries of the South;
- Sanction senior officials and political personnel who in European countries have favoured or are favouring the spoliation in various forms of the peoples of the South;
- Heavily sanction banks (including withdrawal of banking licences) that launder dirty money and are complicit in tax evasion, capital flight, funding of activities that contribute to climate change and spoliation of the populations of the South.

CHAPTER 3

Ending the EU's neo-colonial policies in the field of trade and investment

Day in, day out, the coronavirus pandemic is a catalyst for inequalities across the world. These inequalities tend to increase both within countries and between countries and regions of the world. We have shown that the policy of making countries indebted, far from serving to finance essential services, serves as a mechanism for the domination of the countries of the South by the capitals of the North. If we want to address inequalities, more than ever we must promote a policy of debt cancellation. The same applies to trade relations. These have only replaced the old colonial relations, largely favouring the capital of the countries of the North, reproducing the productive divisions at international level and making the popula-

tions of the countries of the South massively precarious.

In the context of the global crisis of capitalism and the stalemate facing multilateral negotiations within the WTO, EU governments are increasingly strengthening the dynamics of regional trade agreements in their relations with almost all continents: Asia (Korea, India, ASEAN countries), North America (Canada), South America (Mercosur, Peru/Colombia/Ecuador), Central America, the Middle East (Gulf Cooperation Council). The EU is currently negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with various regions of Africa. With the countries on Europe's southern periphery (on the shore of the Mediterranean) and eastern periphery



Seattle, 1999.

(Ukraine, Moldova and the Caucasus States), the European Union has embarked on a process of negotiating so-called free trade agreements which have already been signed and for which negotiations for a second generation have begun. These are comprehensive and in-depth free trade agreements that include harmonization of laws and regulations (including existing European Community law) to the benefit of large companies and banks, especially those of the dominant countries within the EU, at the expense of peoples' rights. The EU is thus out on a neo-colonial trade crusade to subordinate the peoples of the Periphery to the dominant factions of European big business and to impose even more liberal conditions than those obtained within the

WTO on the profits of its capitalist corporations.

The trio World Bank, IMF and WTO are acting together to support this trade war for the benefit of multinationals through the neoliberal policies assiduously pursued by the majority of EU governments and the ruling class in the South. These agreements interconnect with bilateral investment treaties/agreements and all include binding mechanisms such as state-to-state (WTO's dispute-settlement system) or investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms (for instance the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, ICSID, which is part of the World Bank Group) to reinforce the subordination of states to multinationals in order to

ensure corporate profitability and protect their investments to the detriment of peoples and the environment. Thus, these neo-colonial trade and investment agreements are very broad and cover virtually all economic, social, political, cultural and environmental fields.

These agreements have different objectives, which can be clustered into three categories.

The first objective is to guarantee international capital access to the new areas of profit and exploitation by:

- Doing away with or substantially reducing customs duties and so-called non-tariff barriers in the industrial and agricultural sectors;
- privatizing public social sectors (health, education, urban transport...) and public enterprises in strategic sectors (telecommunications, banking, energy...), in accordance with the provisions of the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) concerning the liberalization of trade in goods and services;
- encouraging Foreign Direct Investment.

The second objective is to protect the privileged position of capital

from the EU's dominant economies in particular and the EU in general, as well as the control over the division of labour and power relations, specific to the hierarchy of global production chains, by:

- enforcing compliance with competition law and policy as well as public market regulations for the benefit of big business;
- complying with patent rules (the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS));
- shifting to light, non-binding environmental protection standards;
- strengthening sanitary and phytosanitary standards for exports from the South, etc.

The third objective is to make cheap labour available to capital through:

- deregulating workers' rights with the introduction of maximum flexibility, i.e. precariousness. This deregulation and precariousness affect workers in the South as well as in the North because they are in competition with each other.

On the one hand, through these expansionary trade and investment

agreements, the EU is forcing countries in the South to open their borders, markets and public services to companies of the centre of the EU to export subsidized products without encountering customs barriers in order to plunder their wealth, exploit underpaid labour and repatriate surplus-value. On the other hand, it reinforces the protection mechanisms of its big capitalists with very strict health and food standards and by demanding binding social, fiscal and environmental clauses for imports from the South. These binding provisions are, for example, introduced in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to limit the volume of exports to the European market, especially of agricultural products that compete directly with those of European countries.

**THE DESTRUCTIVE
EFFECTS OF SO-CALLED
FREE TRADE
AGREEMENTS**

The destructive effects of these free trade agreements signed with the EU are already clearly visible in the majority of countries of the South and more particularly in the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in sub-Saharan Africa. These have earned the name of “economic hanging agreements” or “economic impoverishment agreements” already

put forward by several struggle organizations in Africa. Their main impacts are as follows:

- Deepening of trade deficits and structural dependency;
- Loss of customs revenue and increase in the balance-of-payments deficit;
- Massive indebtedness repaid mainly by the majority of the population through tax increases and cuts in state social spending;
- Worsening of the deterioration of environmental conditions through extractivism and resource grabbing;
- Destruction of local seeds and restriction of local production of (generic) medicines by intellectual property rights (commodification of knowledge);
- Increasing impoverishment of small peasantry and food dependency;
- Increasing mass unemployment by destroying small producers in structurally weak industry and in agriculture producing for the national or local market, and by generalizing flexibility and precariousness of jobs and subcontracting;

- Deterioration of conditions for women through privatization of public services (education and health), destruction of the peasantry, unemployment, etc;
- Multiplication of barriers and mechanisms to limit the crossing of the borders of Fortress Europe by migrants and refugees from the South.

The main consequences of the EPAs: a weakening of economies at the macroeconomic level, making them more dependent on the global market; the transfer of the costs of external liberalization to the majority of the population; a deterioration of local production and environment; as well as a strengthening of gender inequalities. At the same time, by making border crossings more difficult or even impossible, EPAs protect the European powers from the social costs that their neo-colonial policies generate.

It should also be stressed that these agreements have an authoritarian impact in the sense that they reinforce undemocratic decision-making structures and practices in Southern countries. The negotiations of free trade agreements are characterized by opacity, which does not allow for any real democratic debate. The dominant classes in the countries of the South ac-

cept the majority of the provisions of these agreements because they coincide with the interests of local big capitalists who are forging fruitful partnerships with European capitalists in order to strengthen their position in local power relations and to accumulate advantages and benefits to the detriment of the peoples of Europe and the South. These agreements are endorsed by undemocratic parliaments which do not represent the aspirations of the people.

TASKS FOR THE RADICAL LEFT

The radical Left in Europe must work very closely with the radical social and political movements in the South to fight against this trade crusade by the imperialist countries and their international institutions (especially the WB, IMF and WTO trio) which increases the concentration of wealth in the hands of a capitalist minority on a global scale. They must also combine their efforts to fight the ruling classes of the South who act as a kind of bridgehead for this new colonization which exacerbates the underdevelopment and poverty of the inhabitants. Their common objective must be to actively contribute to bringing revolutionary and popular governments to power, based on real democratic institutions at the

grassroots level and on a permanent popular mobilization.

TASKS OF A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT

A radical grassroots force coming into government in a European country must begin by breaking with the logic of the unequal, unjust and undemocratic terms of world trade, which imply the non-equivalence of the values produced and exchanged and the accentuation of the underdevelopment of the productive forces in the South maintained by capitalism in its current neoliberal phase. The corollary of this exchange is the system of international division of labour which condemns the economies of the South to specialize in the export of raw materials, agricultural and fishery products and to remain dependent on most levels, whether industrial, technological, financial, food or other. Here we find a very old logic that confines the peoples of the South to the status of neo-colonies and suppliers to the world powers. The imperialist countries on the other side are strengthening their protectionism to control import volumes in order to guarantee and maximize the profits of their capitalist enterprises and secure the dominant position of "their" capital in the global production chains. They impose the opening

of the markets of the South to allow European exports, which are often subsidized.

A radical left-wing force that intends to enter government must commit itself to placing trade at the service of popular aspirations and to prioritizing solidarity over competitiveness. It must commit itself to take measures to eradicate poverty and malnutrition and to promote employment stability instead of the free movement of capital. The aim is to unite the peoples by developing an alliance of workers, small producers, peasants and the unemployed in the South with the oppressed of Europe and not to tie them to the interests of each ruling class.

The People's Government will establish assistance programmes for the industrialization of the economies of the South and for the construction of independent, autonomous, solidarity-based local economies, promoting endogenous human and democratic development based especially on food sovereignty.

A People's Government will have to give preferential access to its markets for products that respect notions of equity and that come from small producers. As for agribusiness products and those that violate social and environmental

standards, they will be more heavily taxed. The Government will reactivate short marketing networks and back actions to support small local producers in both the North and South and establish direct and trusting links between producers and consumers. It will recognize and support the right of populations to live with dignity in their territories without any foreign commercial aggression and without forced displacement for any reason.

The People's Government will work to develop alternative trade cooperation projects that meet the aspirations of the people, drawing on the arguments and experiences of the struggle against the so-called free trade agreements led by radical social and political movements in the countries of the South. ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America – a People's Trade Treaty) is a good example, built on the principles of solidarity, complementarity, justice and cooperation, and placing human beings at the centre of its tenets and practices.

It will take radical measures to break this international trade mechanism of subjugation and dispossession of peoples as part of a global process of breaking with the capitalist mode of production, for an ecological, feminist, socialist and internationalist alternative.

THE FIRST STEPS OF A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT

- Subject all bilateral and multilateral investment and trade treaties to an audit with citizen participation and suspend their application for the duration of the audit. Repeal all treaties the audit will deem illegitimate and/or abusive.
- Disobey WTO provisions and terminate all free trade, partnership and investment agreements with the countries of the South.
- Encourage the exercise of popular sovereignty in the countries of the South to develop fair trade that respects social and environmental justice and set up real cooperation mechanisms that put an end to pillage and promote the emergence of their economies.
- Support measures for food sovereignty and for ecological and socially fair production in the countries of the South.
- Leave the WTO and call for an international campaign against this institution and its two counterparts, the WB and the IMF, and for their replacement by democratic institutions of solidarity.

- End dispute settlement mechanisms that allow large corporations to claim huge sums of money from states if the latter take measures in the general interest that reduce the profits of private capitalist interests. The Government will then institute a procedure to leave the ICSID (a World Bank entity) and the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO.
- Institutionalize an accepted and legitimate arbitration procedure that consists of prosecuting transnational corporations within its national jurisdiction and increasing their financial penalties according to the gravity of their violation of the sovereignty of peoples, and/or of social and environmental standards.
- Heavily sanction companies that do not respect human rights and environmental standards.
- Support the initiative for a legally binding treaty compelling transnational corporations to respect human rights in all their aspects: civil, political, economic, social and cultural.
- Unveil secrecy surrounding trade and investment agreements that allow companies to increasingly take the place of peoples and States in order to protect their freedom of action and investment.
- Denounce and cut ties with despotic regimes and governments in the South that sign these agreements, because they take advantage of them at all levels to enrich themselves and divert fortunes abroad.

CHAPTER 4

Ending the inhumane migration policies of Fortress Europe

As shown by the terrible migrant reception crisis which took place in March 2020 on the Turkey-Greece border, the European Union has adopted an inhumane “fortress” policy. The coronavirus-related health crisis is particularly affecting refugee camps such as the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos. These camps are in themselves a violation of the fundamental rights of people fleeing war and insecurity. The hosting capacity of these camps has been far exceeded for years, which will only increase the number of coronavirus victims. It is high time to put an end to this policy.

Since the Schengen agreement in 1985, the questions of migration and

policies implemented to restrict it have been a priority for European Union countries. While the Schengen agreement opened borders between member countries, it also marked the point where building Fortress Europe as we know it today began.

European border policies have become more and more harsh, linking migratory policy to antiterrorist policy. This dangerous link became the justification for European border policies.¹ The Frontex agency, in charge of coordinating European border “protection”, saw its budget soar from 6 to 330 million

1 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/07/regulation-reinforce-checks-external-borders/>



Euros from 2005 to 2019. This impressive increase clearly shows the place migrant control policies hold in the present-day EU. Firstly, this means strengthening physical borders using walls and barriers over at least 990 km, and reliance on high-tech surveillance equipment. What this actually means is militarizing borders, seeking to “protect” European soil, like a city under siege from “barbarians.” Moreover, when discussing borders, we must not forget that the main one is the Mediterranean Sea. It is also the most deadly, with more than 35,000 people drowned in less than 20 years.

More broadly, it is an approach to border policy that is consubstantial with the neoliberal political agenda.

Structural adjustment policies have favoured capital in countries of the North while increasing dependency among Global South countries.² In short, these are policies that resume colonial relations, by exacerbating social crisis in many formerly colonized countries, and push people to migrate towards Europe.

For some years now, European countries have sought to outsource management of surveillance of this extremely deadly border. This is why the 2016 Valetta summit shored up programmes aiming to externalize European borders.³

2 <https://www.cadtm.org/Les-transferts-negatifs-sont-les-causes-des-exils-forces>

3 European Commission, “Trust Fund for Stability and addressing root causes of irregular

This externalization aims to delegate responsibilities for management of migratory issues such as reception, asylum and border control to non-European countries. This policy has two main aims:

- upstream reduction in mobility of migrants towards the EU;
- increased returns from European territory to third-party countries.

In effect, Europe's borders have been pushed farther and farther away. In July 2017, Italy, backed by the EU and its member states, signed an agreement with Libya's El-Sarraj Government of National Accord, after reaching a similar agreement with Turkey in 2016 and negotiating Migratory Pacts with five African countries. After making European entry countries such as Greece and Italy shoulder responsibility for asylum seekers under the so-called "Dublin rule," the EU is now seeking to push management of its external borders across the Mediterranean. This policy means a severe reduction in asylum rights and leads to violation of migrants' human rights.

These measures, justified by the "migratory crisis," targeted Sahel countries first. Thus, under the

pretext of combating terrorism and organised crime, military missions have been deployed at the Mali and Somali borders as well as those of the Central African Republic. These measures deprive those countries of their sovereignty and independence. Similar deployments have provided further opportunities to meddle in African countries, such as France's blatant interference in Mali to protect its historic colonial interests during the expansion of Touareg groups, under the pretext of rooting out terrorism and organised crime, including "illegal immigration."⁴

Firstly, the logic behind externalization allows the EU and its Member States to shirk their commitments in terms of reception, in violation of the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees. Secondly, externalization enables the EU and its Member States to flee their responsibilities regarding violations of fundamental rights (violence and refoulement) greatly in excess of what European public opinion is aware of during border patrol operations. Due to the relations of dominance European countries maintain towards countries of the South, public opinion in those countries has not been taken into account when its people

migration and displaced persons in Africa", DG DEVCO, 1 March 2017.

4 European Council on Foreign Relations "Halting ambition: EU migration and security policy in the Sahel" www.ecfr.eu

challenge these policies. In short, while capital flight and exploitation of natural resources are tolerated, if not encouraged, by dictatorships in countries of the South, people are prevented from enjoying freedom of movement and travel and must take great risks.

At the 2016 European Council, the 28 Heads of State agreed to launch Migration Compacts with five African pilot countries. These pacts ensure partnerships that use tools within the competence of the EU (development aid and trade) to commit African states to stem the flow of migrants to European shores and take back people who have transited through their countries, or their own nationals. So we are seeing not only instrumentalization of ODA (Official Development Assistance) in order to restrict migration, but also instrumentalization of the migration issue to facilitate European investment in third countries. Finally, these negotiations usually take place in total opacity, which only increases their illegitimate aspect.

To get non-European countries to accept implementation of a restrictive migration policy, the Union and its Member States use development aid as a bargaining chip. In exchange for measures that can limit upstream departures and increase returns from the EU of migrants

deemed “undesirable” towards so-called countries “of origin” (readmission agreements), the EU and its Member States provide or refuse access to different ODA funds. Furthermore, this use of Development Aid results in violating fundamental rights such as the right to claim asylum and the principle of non-refoulement (Geneva Convention, the right to leave any country, including one’s own – Article 13 of the UDHR –; freedom of movement within the ECOWAS region via strengthened enforcement, profiling and detention; the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment; and the right to protection of personal data and the principle of non-discrimination, to mention but a few.

Initiatives such as the Rabat and Khartoum processes, and especially the Africa Emergency Plan Fund, are also mechanisms created to implement a border externalization policy. Since 2015 this fund has had available more than 4,700 million Euros,⁵ of which at least 1,270 million⁶ are targeted for border management. This policy in fact amounts to misappropriation, with funds intended to “help development” of African countries being used to a large extent to control borders.

5 https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/trust-fund-financials_en

6 <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/thematic/improved-migration-management>

These projects serve, for example, to fund the training and arming of criminal groups in north-western Libya to act as coast guards to prevent migrants from travelling to Europe from that country at any cost; this has had fatal consequences. At the same time, it has been proven that there is major human trafficking in Libya, and that “slave markets” have operated openly. Of course, this is inadmissible, because this “emergency fund” has brought no positive response to centuries of colonial and neo-colonial relations. This fund actually perpetuates these, making these countries “border guards” at the edges of Fortress Europe.

PROPOSALS

Criminalization of migrant people will not eliminate clandestine immigration. On the contrary, these approaches lead to the exacerbation of clandestine immigration and the catastrophic death-toll that follows in its wake. Young Africans, fleeing death, poverty and destitution, will continue to risk leaving their countries.

Any progressive forces that take power in a European country must imperatively oppose Fortress Europe policies and disobey them, in order to respect human rights. Their action must be inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights and the Geneva Convention in terms of asylum rights. In more immediate terms, they must:

- Close internment centres for migrant persons, which are outright prisons;
- Do away with criminalisation and laws classifying migrants as “illegal” persons; also do away with the moralizing distinctions between good migrants (those who have access to asylum, those who have access to the labour market) and bad (“illegal”) migrants;
- Implement actual measures welcoming migrants, guaranteeing access to public services;
- Implement safe pathways (in physical and legal terms) so that people may migrate. This would also involve full access to the consular and diplomatic resources of the countries involved and abandoning the subcontracted management system via “Schengen visas.”
- Defend free movement within and beyond the Schengen Area;
- In countries on Europe’s borders, put an end to military installations such as walls and fences, surveillance systems and so on;

- Refrain from applying the Dublin Regulation if migrants wish to ask for asylum in a country other than the one by which they entered the European Union.

Legal and administrative frameworks must be eased, and permanent dialogue maintained to ensure that people circulate under safe conditions in order to make migration a choice rather than a deadly need.

Neither immigration policies nor development aid can compensate African populations for centuries of pillage of their natural and human resources which has left an immense ecological debt and plunged them into underdevelopment and violence, which in turn entail forced displacement and asylum claims.

The natural and human wealth the continent has today is capable of guaranteeing the peoples of Africa real development and safe living that will not force them to

move elsewhere, if the peoples of the continent can exert sovereignty over their countries' wealth. Ensuring a decent and safe life for the continent's peoples is linked to their control over decision-making, which must be freed from neoliberal policies and neo-colonial mechanisms (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization). These alternatives will require peoples to build democratic systems and strengthen self-organization against the current regimes in quest of their sovereignty. Migration must be a priority in their struggle, since its causes are linked to neoliberal policies.

Any popular government of a European country must go beyond the European Union's exclusive and colonialist framework. There must be a reparations policy with respect to the pillage and exploitation of resources the ruling classes and major firms of European countries have practised for centuries.

CHAPTER 5

A project against militarist Europe

THERE IS NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE

The European Union and its Member States bear heavy direct and indirect responsibilities in armed conflicts which leave death and destruction in their wake, affecting millions around the world. Those who survive in conflict zones are affected by the physical destruction of housing, public health and education services, power plants, water sanitation units and infrastructure for the delivery of such vital goods as energy and water. Thus armed conflicts have lasting negative consequences on the capacities of affected societies to guarantee fundamental human rights and to be resilient to other major shocks such as natural di-

asters or health emergencies. Just consider the potentially devastating impact of an epidemic such as the CoViD-19 in regions heavily affected by infrastructure destruction, or in camps where hundreds of thousands of people fleeing conflict and persecution are crammed together in deplorable conditions.

For the ruling classes, who represent a tiny minority of the population but who are in control of state power, arms are, on the other hand, an effective means — all the more so if the monopoly of coercion is successfully exercised by the State — of maintaining the existing social order, as soon as domination is no longer accepted as natural by the dominated. Moreover, the necessary reconstruction of areas devastated



by war provides new opportunities for accumulation of capital.

For the movements of the political and social Left that would like to embody a force for change in Europe aimed at laying the foundations for an egalitarian and solidarity-based society, it is imperative in this context to take up anti-militarist politics. This means fighting not only against the wars of European imperialist powers, but also against arms sales and support for repressive and warring regimes.

CAPITALISM PRODUCES INCREASINGLY POWERFUL WEAPONS

Industrial capitalism has led to a massive production of weapons

by industrialists who have gained considerable economic and political weight, particularly in the United States, Western Europe, Russia and China. Because of the purpose of its production, capital in the field of armaments has a very special status in our capitalist societies: armament is an area where the State and private capital are very closely intertwined. Decisions on research, production and trade are not taken without the approval of the State, while industrialists are protected and subsidized by the State, which even acts as a sales representative for the capitalists of the arms industry.

Pushed by a constant drive for innovation, the arms industry has developed ever more destructive weapons, especially since the First

World War. Armoured vehicles, tanks and battleships and submarines with ever-increasing capabilities have multiplied on the battlefields. Above all, the development and generalization of military aviation (and aircraft carriers) sowed death and terror among the civilian population (a characteristic of total wars). A similar objective of terror and death on an industrial scale among civilian populations was pursued with the development of chemical weapons, which were central to the Nazi extermination of European Jews and Gypsies in the gas chambers, as well as to the imperialist endeavour of Washington in Vietnam with Agent Orange. It is again this same logic that presided over the development of the atomic bomb, used by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

The use of advanced technologies is nowadays at the heart of the development of weapons systems, for example drones (vehicles – airborne or not – remotely controlled or automated, which can be used for surveillance as well as in combat when equipped with missiles), and automated borders (recognizing clandestine crossings through a system of sensors). As with the development of aviation in the 20th century, these technologies establi-

sh an ever greater distance between those who kill and those who are killed (or between those who guard the border and those who seek to cross it), thus limiting the risk of injury to the assailant and empathy for the victims.

WHILE THE EUROPEAN UNION TALKS ABOUT PEACE, IT SOWS THE SEEDS OF WAR

The EU Member States produce and sell weapons on a massive scale. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in its March 2020 report on international arms transfers,¹ gives the volume, origin and destination of the world's major arms sales for the period 2015-2019. SIPRI indicates that arms exports increased by 5.5 per cent over this period compared to the period 2010-2014, and by 20 per cent compared to the period 2005-2009. While the top two arms-exporting states, the US and Russia, account for more than half of global arms exports (36% and 21% respectively), the EU Member States are not lagging behind. France and Germany are the third- and fourth-largest arms-exporting states,

1 Pieter D. Wezeman, Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Diego Lopes Da Silva, Nan Tian, Simon T. Wezeman, *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2019, SIPRI Fact Sheet*, March 2020.

while the United Kingdom (which was still a member of the EU for the period 2015-2019) and Spain rank sixth and seventh. Among the world's top 25 arms-exporting states, responsible for 99% of global exports, there are nine EU member states, which account for 25.6% of global exports.

Despite what governments say when questioned on the subject, it is clear that the best customers are authoritarian and warring regimes – not because they are interested only in increasing their deterrent capabilities, but because they actually use these weapons. The SIPRI report indicates that different EU Member States are among the three main arms suppliers of the following authoritarian, repressive, warring or colonial regimes (this non-exhaustive list only takes into account the world's 40 main arms importers): Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, China, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Pakistan, the State of Israel, Turkey, Indonesia, Singapore, Morocco, Brazil, Kuwait.

By intervening militarily in different parts of the world, imperialist powers seek not only to maintain their economic and political domination over countries of the Global South – while at the same time strengthening authoritarian regimes there – but also to de-

monstrate the effectiveness of their weapons systems for their potential clients. In recent years, we can mention – not exhaustively – the participation of EU Member States in the wars in Afghanistan from 2001 onwards and in Iraq in 2003, in the military intervention in Libya in 2011, in the war in Mali since 2013, and in the military coalition against various jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria since 2014. In addition, European armies are deployed in many countries around the world under military cooperation agreements with existing regimes. Here again, the case of France, which has signed such agreements with many African countries, is emblematic. For those of these countries that export arms, these interventions are opportunities to demonstrate the effectiveness of the weapons they offer for sale.

The EU is developing a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). While it has not yet been possible to achieve a fully integrated military policy and a common army, it is nevertheless making it possible to strengthen the military cooperation of its Member States. Furthermore, while the imperialism of the EU and its Member States retains a degree of autonomy, its alignment with US imperialism is the general rule. In terms of military imperialism, the majority of the EU Member States

are members of NATO, and the accession to NATO of Eastern European states and the former Yugoslav bloc is a de facto precondition for their accession to the EU. The EU thus enables the strengthening of the military presence of the United States and its allies at the gates of Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc, and participates directly in the imperial domination of the West over the rest of the world. This cannot conceal the fact that a number of European states, especially from the core of the EU, are themselves directly involved in this domination as states.

VIOLENT SOCIETIES

In this way, the EU and its Member States are contributing to the establishment of increasingly violent societies, in Europe, at its borders, but also in the rest of the world. With capitalism's crises (which are inherent) coming at ever shorter intervals, the mode of domination of the possessing classes is less and less achieved through the acceptance of this domination as natural and legitimate, and more and more through coercion. Social order is maintained by the use of weapons: the exploitation of the labour power of the overwhelming majority of the world's population is facilitated by its submission to an authority that is known to be

(potentially) violent, including in societies with political institutions that are considered "democratic." This is obviously a political choice of the ruling classes, who favour this militarization of societies to the detriment of the development of the areas of social reproduction — health, education, housing, leisure, etc. This logic has been largely highlighted by the CoViD-19 pandemic in 2020 — a health crisis that was unprecedented for more than a century —, during which the health systems of states that are among the world's main sellers and buyers of arms proved incapable of dealing with the situation. In France, the shortage of masks and equipment for health care personnel and the population was widely noted in contrast to the French State's purchase of several years' stockpiles of repressive weapons.

In addition, many customers of arms-exporting states are also debtors of those states and of international financial institutions (the World Bank and IMF). The debt incurred by these repressive and warring states should be considered odious according to the definition of the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM), from which it is worth quoting here: "any loan must be considered odious if a regime, democratically elected or not, does not respect the funda-

mental principles of international law such as fundamental human rights, the sovereignty of States, or the absence of the use of force. The creditors, in the case of notorious dictators, cannot plead their innocence and demand to be repaid. In this case, the purpose of the loans is not fundamental for the categorisation of the debt. In fact, financially supporting a criminal regime, even for hospitals and schools, is tantamount to helping the regime's consolidation and self-preservation. Firstly, some useful investments (roads, hospitals...) can later be used to odious ends, for example, to sustain war efforts. Secondly, the fungibility of funds makes it possible for a government that borrows to serve the population or the State – which, officially, is always the case – to generate other funds for less noble goals.”²

TOWARDS A WORLD ORDER BASED ON EQUALITY, DEMOCRACY AND SOLIDARITY

If popular governments are to embody forces for change, they should implement policies aimed at making a radical break with an une-

qual and violent world. However, the following measures can be put forward by social movements without waiting for the establishment of popular governments.

- A popular government in a member state of NATO will leave the latter and cease all cooperation with it. This constitutes a major issue of symbolic and material rupture with the existing political order at the international level; it would amount to nothing less than the “de-Westernisation” of international relations by refusing alignment with the interests of the US superpower and by demonstrating that international relations of solidarity rather than subjugation are possible.
- The military command which is the most closely linked with the capitalist state and class will be dismissed and the army will be re-organized under democratic control. If the state is involved in wars abroad, it will initiate a process of disengagement to be completed as soon as possible and replaced with humanitarian support under the democratic control of the people concerned.

2 Éric Toussaint, “The Doctrine of Odious Debt: from Alexander Sack to the CADTM”, cadtm.org, 24 November 2016. URL: <http://www.cadtm.org/The-Doctrine-of-Odious-Debt-from>

- A popular government will engage towards global disarmament and dismantle its nuclear weapons if it has any. It will socialize the weapons industry and implement a moratorium on arms production and sales abroad, and it will repurpose the sectors producing offensive weapons, giving priority to the sectors of social reproduction — health, education, housing, etc., — all the while providing support and training for the workers of the reconverted industries and maintaining their salaries. It will initiate retroactive legal actions against those responsible for the sales of arms to criminal regimes.
- A popular government will take sanctions against regimes that violate international law and fundamental human rights, paying attention not to further endanger the populations of the said regimes when a dependent country is concerned (for instance, it will take targeted actions against individuals responsible for the actions of the regime rather than indiscriminate economic sanctions).

It will freeze all economic ties with the State of Israel as long as the latter does not comply with international law and UN resolutions, that is until the State of Israel recognizes the sovereignty of the Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and the international regime of Jerusalem (meaning the abandonment of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem), ends its blockade on the Gaza Strip and its Apartheid regime within its own borders, and allows Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

- A popular government will actively support oppressed nations and peoples (e. g. Palestinian, Kurdish, Sahrawi, Rohingya) through humanitarian and diplomatic help. It will assist populations whose lives are directly threatened, including through measures to prevent criminal regimes from committing mass murders.

- In the medium term at international level, several popular governments should establish a strong enough power relationship to enter into meaningful negotiations with oppressive powers for the settlement of national issues (e. g. Palestine, Western Sahara, Kurdistan) and protracted civil wars (e. g. Syria). They should also aim at profoundly reforming

the United Nations (or else replacing it) in order to transform it into a truly democratic conflict-resolution body that is not dominated by five powers – the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China – each having a permanent seat and a veto in the Security Council, as is currently the case.

French military in Mali



CHAPTER 6

Reparations for the crimes of European colonial powers and European neo-colonialism

Thanks to the Black Lives Matter mobilizations that have been taking place in 2020 on an international scale against racism in general and negrophobia in particular, more and more people want to know the truth about the dark past of the colonial powers and its neo-colonial perpetuation today. Statues of emblematic figures of European colonialism are being toppled or denounced. The same is true of statues of people who, in the United States, symbolize slavery and racism. ReCommonsEurope

praises all initiatives and actions which aim to denounce colonial crimes, seek to establish the truth about past atrocities, highlight the instruments of neo-colonialism and all forms of resistance from the past to the present, call for reparations and demand an end to all forms of discrimination against peoples who were or are victims of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

On 30 June 2020, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Congo's independence, the news went



Protesters in Bristol pull down the statue of a slave trader, on June 7th, 2020

round the world: Philippe, King of the Belgians, in a letter to the Head of State and the Congolese people, expressed regret for the colonial past and in particular for the period during which Leopold II personally owned the Congo (1885-1908).

Here is the main passage of this letter: “At the time of the independent state of Congo, acts of violence and cruelty were committed, which still weigh on our collective memory. The colonial period that followed also caused suffering and humiliation. I would like to express my deepest regret for those wounds of the past, the pain of which is today rekindled by discrimination that is still all too present in our societies. I will continue to fight all forms of racism.” This statement by the King

of the Belgians is one of the results of the vast international movement of awareness and mobilization that has marked the end of May and all of June 2020 since the assassination of George Floyd by the police in the United States. This statement is totally inadequate because it does not explicitly name the culprits: King Leopold II is not even mentioned. Philippe does not present apologies and does not propose that the royal family and/or the Belgian State pay reparations. Nor is there any question of retroceding the goods stolen from the Congolese people at the time of Leopold II’s domination of Congo and during the colonial period when Congo was part of Belgium (1908-1960). Some of these goods are in the Tervuren Africa Museum or in private

collections. Philippe does not propose to remove statues of colonizers and other symbols of the colonial period in the Belgian public space or at least to accompany them with plaques publicly explaining the horrors of the colonial period.¹

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, for his part, is opposed to the removal of statues of historical figures, such as Colbert, who promoted slavery and the slave trade.

There is a huge job still to be done.

**NEO-COLONIALISM
AND EUROPE'S GRIM
PAST OF COLONIALISM
AND THE SLAVE TRADE:
HISTORIC, MORAL AND
COLONIAL DEBTS**

The Triangular Trade (linking Europe, Africa and the Americas) was motivated by the search for capitalist development in the colonizing countries.²

1 See Eric Toussaint, "Reply to the letter by Philippe, King of the Belgians, about Belgium's responsibility in the exploitation of the Congolese people", cadtm.org, 8 July 2020. URL: <https://www.cadtm.org/Reply-to-the-letter-by-Philippe-King-of-the-Belgians-about-Belgium-s>

2 On the subject, see. P. Pluchon, *La Route des esclaves. Négriers et bois d'ébène au XVIIIe siècle*, Hachette, 1980. As well as Araujo, A. L. (2017) *Reparations for slavery and the slave trade: a transnational and comparative history*. London: Bloomsbury Academic / Beckles, H.

For more than 400 years, over 12 million men, women and children were the victims of the tragic transatlantic slave trade. Women slaves, in particular, bore a triple burden: in addition to forced labour in the harshest of conditions, they suffered extremely cruel forms of discrimination and sexual exploitation as a result of their gender and skin colour.

After the abolition of slavery that occurred in several stages in the 19th century, European countries, through massacres, colonized the African continent and carved it up between them at the Berlin Conference held in 1884-1885. The colonization of Africa resulted in genocides, the exploitation of populations, extractivism that devastated resources and biotopes and cultural and religious oppression.

But that is not all: the colonial powers have resorted to the debt mechanism to keep the former colonies in a coercive economic situation. The World Bank was directly involved in some colonial debts. During the 1950s and 1960s, it

(2013) *Britain's black debt: reparations for Caribbean slavery and native genocide*. Kingston, Jamaica: University Of West Indies Press / Davis, D. B. and Askews & Holts Library Services (2006) *Inhuman bondage: the rise and fall of slavery in the New World*. New York: Oxford University Press <http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=GlasgowUni&isbn=9780199726653/>

granted loans to the colonial powers for projects allowing the European centres to maximize the exploitation of their colonies. Part of the debts contracted with the WB by the Belgian, British, and French authorities for their colonies were then transferred to the countries that gained independence without their consent. Thus the former colonies were required to repay the debts that the colonizing states had contracted to exploit them. This was done in violation of international law. However, these debts were not cancelled. Furthermore, the World Bank refused to follow a 1965 UN resolution requiring it to stop supporting Portugal as long as Portugal did not renounce its colonial policy.³

One of the most striking cases of colonial debt is that of Haiti. In 1804, independence was won from French imperialism by the slave rebellion led by Toussaint Louverture among others (the case of Haiti is particularly emblematic as it was the slaves themselves who seized

their freedom). Twenty-one years later, in 1825, France imposed an indemnity of 150 million gold francs on its former colony, threatening it with military invasion and the restoration of slavery. The burden of this debt still weighs on Haiti and its people. France wanted financial compensation for the loss of income resulting from the abolition of slavery in Haiti. It was therefore the former slave owners who obtained “reparations” and not the enslaved people.

The United Kingdom did no better. After the abolition of slavery in its colonies in 1833, some 3,000 slave-owning families received enormous financial compensation for their loss of “property” – the property in this case being African slaves. Far from being a thing of the past, this episode is very topical as the British government completed the final payments of the Slavery Abolition Loan on 15 February 2015, even as Prime Minister David Cameron, in a speech to the Jamaican Parliament on 30 September 2015, called on Jamaicans to consider slavery a thing of the past and told them that it was time to “get over it.”⁴ Spain has also claimed substantial compensation

3 “to all the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations, in particular the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (=World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund [...] to refrain from giving Portugal any financial, economic or technical assistance until such time as the Portuguese Government renounces its colonial policy, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.” UN Doc. A/AC.109/124 and Corr. 1 (June 10, 1965).

4 CARICOM, “The CRR Media Conference on the British Treasury’s Slavery Loan”, <http://caricomreparations.org/crr-media-conference-british-treasurys-slavery-loan/>

from Morocco for its withdrawal in 1860 from the territory of Tetouan, which had been under Spanish occupation for years.

**THE URGENT NEED
FOR REPARATIONS
AND RESTITUTION OF
CULTURAL PROPERTY**

Louis-Georges Tin legally defines reparations as “legal, moral, material, cultural or symbolic measures set up to compensate a social group or its descendants, individually or collectively, after large-scale damage.”⁵ Reparations for large-scale damage such as genocides, war crimes and crimes against humanity are provided for by international law. The notion of reparation was born out of the need to do justice by the populations that suffered those damages. However, the demand for reparations raises important questions, since the market thus becomes the main mediator of such policies, which can become a means of putting a price on those sufferings.

Requests for reparations are not recent. They date back to the beginning of the enslavement of black populations. On several occasions, as early as the 17th century, the French missionary Épiphanie de Moirans

and the Spanish missionary José de Jaca condemned the slave trade and the keeping of Blacks in slavery for the benefit of the colonial economy in America.

In both the North and the South, many attempts have been made to obtain restorative justice for enslaved and colonized populations. In 1993, the first Pan-African Conference on Reparation was held in Abuja in support of the demand for reparations for the descendants of the victims of African slavery, colonization, and neo-colonialism. This event revived the struggle for reparations within the African and Afro-diaspora community. The conference explicitly called on “the international community to recognize that there is a unique and unprecedented moral debt owed to African peoples that has yet to be paid.”

In May 2001, the French law recognizing the slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity was adopted by the French National Assembly and Senate. It provides that “the French Republic recognizes that the transatlantic slave trade and the slave trade in the Indian Ocean on the one hand, and slavery on the other, perpetrated from the fifteenth century onwards, in the Americas and the Caribbean, in the Indian Ocean and in Europe against

5 Tin, Louis-Georges, 2013, *Esclavage et Réparations*, Éditions Stock (in French).

the African, Amerindian, Malagasy and Indian populations constitute a crime against humanity.” The initial proposal for this law, known as the Taubira law, included a paragraph on reparations: “A committee of qualified personalities shall be set up to determine the harm suffered and to examine the conditions for reparation due in respect of this crime.” However, the article was repealed in the law commission and it was only after the section on reparations was deleted that the law was adopted unanimously by the Assembly. However, that same year, at the Durban World Conference against Racism, boycotted by the United States, the French delegation did not join those calling for the slave trade and colonialism to be recognized as crimes against humanity, and no European country has since followed the French example.

More recently, since 2010, Haitian social movements have been calling for reparations in the face of the cholera epidemic caused by soldiers of MINUSTAH (2004-2017), an occupation mission under the aegis of the UN. It should be remembered that the territory of Haiti was previously occupied by the United States army between 1915 and 1934.

In Belgium, as part of the Decade of the People of African Descent, the United Nations Working Group of

Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD), visiting Belgium in February 2019, organized meetings with representatives of the State and its institutions, as well as civil society of African descent, in order to learn about the situation of people of African descent in the country. In its report, WGEPAD recommends that Belgium implement restorative justice and use the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) ten-point “plan of action for restorative justice” as a guiding framework.⁶ Recently, the NGO Human Rights Watch urged Belgium to provide for reparations, meaning “financial compensation, but also recognition of past atrocities and the damage they continue to cause, and an end to ongoing abuses.”⁷

Thus, despite the actions taken in this direction for several years, the responses to requests for reparations have changed very little. Moreover, pressure is often exerted on former colonized countries to abandon claims for reparations, with the result that initiatives in this direc-

6 Media statement of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on the outcome of its official visit to Belgium from 4 to 11 February 2019, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24153&LangID=E>, item 47.

7 <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2020/06/30/belgique-passer-des-regrets-aux-reparations>

tion are often limited to declarations, indignation and claims but are generally not accompanied by binding measures (which will remain difficult as long as a political body that is independent of the current balance of power is not established).⁸

In addition to requests for reparations, in several European countries (particularly France and Belgium) campaigns have been conducted for the restitution of cultural property and human remains stored in museums or universities. These mobilizations have moved the lines and were accompanied by numerous announcements of restitution to countries of origin by the French and Belgian authorities. Restitutions – a taboo word only a few years ago – are now mentioned or even announced. However, speeches are rarely accompanied by concrete actions, as the French situation shows, where the serious work of Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr has only led to renunciations since the submission of their report to the French president in 2018.⁹ Des-

8 <https://www.colonialismreparation.org/fr/newsletter-01-20-plus-d-elan-dans-la-demande-de-reparation-caricom.html>

9 During his speech at the University of Ouagadougou on 28 November 2017, the President of the Republic of France expressed the wish that “within five years the conditions will be met for the temporary or definitive restitu-

tion of African heritage in Africa.” Following this declaration, two academics, Bénédicte Savoy, professor at the Technische Universität of Berlin, holder of the chair of Cultural History of Artistic Heritage in Europe, 18th-20th century, and Felwine Sarr, professor at the Gaston-Berger University of Saint-Louis (Senegal) were commissioned to submit a report on this subject. The report was submitted to the President of the Republic on 23 November 2018.

In 2018, the question of the restitution of cultural goods and human remains looted in Africa was raised in Belgium on the occasion of the reopening of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium). A collective composed mainly of members of the diaspora and researchers published an article in the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* calling for the restitution not only of cultural property but also of human remains.¹¹

10 <https://www.colonialismreparation.org/en/newsletter-03-20-le-lent-chemin-des-restitutions.html>

11 Carte blanche: “La Belgique à la traîne sur la restitution des trésors coloniaux” - published by *Le Soir* on 25 September 2018, <https://plus.lesoir.be/180528/article/2018-09-25/carte-blanche-la-belgique-est-la-traîne-sur-la-restitution-des-tresors-coloniaux> (in French).

As with the question of reparations, the actual acts of restitution by the Belgian and French States will have to be audited in order to eliminate any suggestion of manoeuvres to mask a false reparation. We must avoid reproducing what happened with the treaty of friendship between Libya and Italy signed in 2008 by President Muammar Gaddafi and the head of the Italian government Silvio Berlusconi. It provided for compensation from Italy to Libya for the colonial period.¹² This gesture by Italy was in fact guided by economic and political interests. The apology was accompanied by “reparations” in the form of “tied” investments, obtaining contracts, control of natural resources and conditionalities such as the control of migration flows, etc., which amounted to imposing and perpetuating a neo-colonial relationship of domination.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS TO KICK-START THE ISSUE OF REPARATIONS AND RESTITUTIONS IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The recommendations can be drawn from the CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Committee for Reparations’ 10-point plan. This group of 15 Caribbean countries has been the most successful in mobilizing for reparations for the crimes of slavery and colonialism. The recommendations reproduced below concern France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which, in addition to a public and sincere apology, are called upon to cancel the external debt of CARICOM member States. Furthermore, these recommendations constitute good guiding principles for the development of “road maps” for all European countries responsible for slavery and colonialism.

ReCommonsEurope will pursue this work by extending it as far as possible to ongoing debates and proposals in other countries.

¹² Chiara Filoni, “Fausses réparations et nouvelle colonisation italienne en Libye”: <https://www.cadtm.org/Fausses-reparations-et-nouvelle-colonisation-italienne-en-Libye> (in French only).

The following are the key measures proposed in the CARICOM committee:

1) A full and formal apology, as opposed to the “expressions of regret” that some countries may have expressed. Nevertheless, apologies – which have therefore always remained on the fringes of reflections of remembrance linked to slavery – are largely insufficient since it is known that they are often expressed to serve more strategic ends, set in a political agenda of circumstance and power relations.¹³

2) The repatriation of the descendants of more than 12 million Africans abducted and deported to the Caribbean as slaves, reduced to livestock and chattels, to return to where they came from.

3) A development programme for indigenous populations who have survived a genocide. In this case, it will be necessary to ensure that the priority of this development model is not the market but the improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants, particularly in terms of public services.

4) Cultural institutions enabling the transmission of memory of victims and their descendants.

5) Resources allocated to the “public health crisis” that is rampant in the Caribbean. The Caribbean being the region with the highest incidence of chronic diseases that emanate directly from nutritional experience, psychological violence and more generally from forms of distress associated with slavery, genocide, and apartheid.

6) The eradication of illiteracy, as black and indigenous populations were left in a situation of widespread illiteracy after independence, particularly in the British colonies.

7) An African Education Programme, to inform people of African descent about their roots.

8) A psychological rehabilitation programme for the care and reparation of people of African descent.

9) Technology transfer to provide better access to science and to the global technological culture. This transfer plays a particularly important role in the need to deal with the consequences of global warming as well as to enable the implementation of an energy transition.

10) The cancellation of all debts to put an end to the “tax chains” that the Caribbean has experienced since liberation from slavery and colonialism.

¹³ R. Hourcade, “The Politics of Apology. Repentir officiel et gestion stratégique de la culpabilité dans un ancien port négrier (Liverpool)”, *Ethnologie française*, No. 177, 2020/1, p. 20.

ReCommonsEurope, echoing the demands of social movements in the Caribbean region, supports the demand for financial compensation for the economic exploitation and racist dehumanization of enslaved Africans. It is estimated that the payment of reparations from Britain to Caribbean Africans would be on the order of £7.5 billion. The £20 million paid to African slavers after the abolition of slavery in 1834 in the British Empire would be worth billions of pounds in today's money.¹⁴ These funds must be capitalized for an alternative, solidarity-based development model... and be controlled by the people.

In addition, other measures are important in the area of reparations:

- **Reparations for ecological crimes** that result in convictions and financial compensation.
- **The history of slavery and colonialism to be included in education** in the broadest sense, i.e. not only in the school curriculum (through teaching) but also promoted in cultu-

ral policies (awareness-raising, support for associations, events, etc.)

- **Calculation of what the colonizing countries owe their former colonies** in terms of stolen goods, looted resources, exploited labour force, etc., is not a simple matter. To do this, a group of economists, lawyers and tax specialists must be created to produce knowledge on reparations. The objective is to find a precise figure that the colonizing country will have to pay to its former colonies for the crimes committed, and to define what communities, schools and foundations the money should go to.
- **Establishment of quotas** for representation within the institutions.
- **Effective condemnation of racist comments and acts.**

14 Hilary Beckles, "Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide", (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2013), p. 144 in Ajamu Nangwaya, "Caribbean reparations movement must put capitalism on trial", *Pambazuka News*, April 2017 <https://www.pambazuka.org/global-south/caribbean-reparations-movement-must-put-capitalism-trial>

CONCLUSION

The findings are glaring. Racist and xenophobic statements as well as acts have been on the increase in recent years in Europe. The structural racism that is a system in the global North, accompanied by uninhibited white supremacy, encourages uninhibited racist behaviour. Moreover, the vast majority of these crimes go unpunished. Nevertheless the structural nature of racism – and the discrimination that results from it – no longer needs to be proved.

On the 26 March 2019, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the “*Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent*” recognizing that “[...] racism and discrimination against people of African descent are structural [...]” and that “[...] this form of racism is the result of the historically repressive structures of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade [...].”¹⁵

Similarly, the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) concluded the following regarding Belgium in its 2019 statement: “*The underlying causes of contemporary human rights violations lie in the lack of recognition of the true extent of the violence and injustice of colonization. As a result, public discourse*

does not reflect a nuanced analysis of how institutions can lead to systemic exclusion in the areas of education, employment, and opportunities. The Working Group concludes that inequalities are deeply entrenched because of overlapping and mutually reinforcing structural barriers. Credible efforts to combat racism require first overcoming these structural barriers.”¹⁶

Yet despite the above statements no significant progress has been made in deconstructing these structures. Thus, while apologies and reparations must be taken into account for any project of society that is truly committed to the human dignity of each individual, without distinction of race, ethnicity or national origin, they are not sufficient to achieve the elimination of structures that sustain discrimination. In other words, each of the recommendations listed above is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one if not considered in the wider context of implementation of all of them.

However, there is hope on the horizon: the brutal killing of George Floyd in the United States has invigorated the Black Lives Matter movement and triggered protests all over the world. Since 30 May, numerous rallies have taken place: in Belgium, 10,000 people have

15 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0239_EN.pdf, items S and B

16 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/News-Events/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24153&LangID=E>, item 13.

demonstrated against racism and police violence; more than 20,000 marched in France, where the story of the death of young Adama Traoré in police custody has resurfaced. In the United States, there are hundreds of thousands of protesters all over the country. In the United Kingdom statues are being toppled. In Australia, large mobilizations also took place. In Brazil, “Vidas Negras Importam” is the slogan that was chanted by hundreds of inhabitants of the Favelas of Rio who gathered on the evening of Sunday 31 May in front of the headquarters of the regional government. The infamous death of George Floyd had the effect of making a large part of public opinion, particularly among young people, aware of the need to denounce and fight institutional racism.



Withdrawal of King Leopold 2 statue in Antwerpen, Belgium, following protests.

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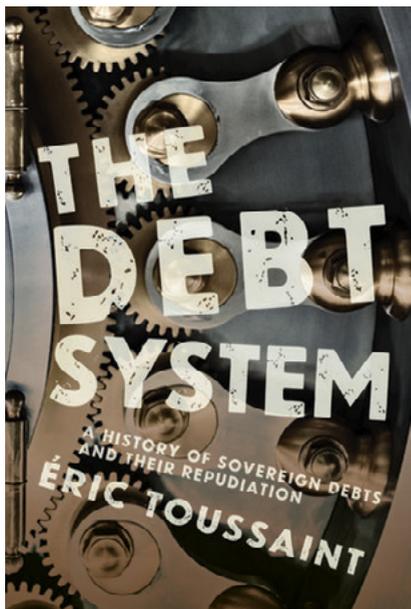
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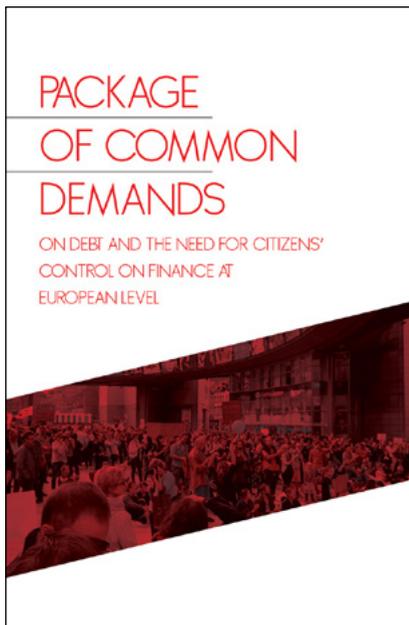


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This document was written collectively by activists from nearly fifteen collectives and organizations across Europe. It has been signed, in whole or in part, by 39 organizations from 10 European countries. It presents their shared findings and common demands on the issue of public and private debt and on the need to establish effective citizen control, both over the means of State financing and the management of public funds, and over banks and other institutions providing credit to households and businesses.

This document has been published in the context of the beginning of the 2019-2024 European institutions' term. It aims to present the shared findings and common demands of some collectives and organizations across Europe on the issue of public and private debt and the need for real citizen control, both on the means for providing finance to States and the management of public funds, and on banks and other credit institutions.

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RECOMMONS EUROPE

IMPACT OF
EUROPEAN POLICIES ON
THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND
POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES