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Greece

A “scientific” congress confines women to role of reproducers

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As we know, the leaders of the European Union are very good at hiding their own turpitude by attacking those who are more reactionary than they are, as we saw at the recent European summit where (justified) attacks were made on Orbán and his homophobic measures, as if the same time the French government were not violently attacking the rights of oppressed groups to hold their own meetings.

"Fertility Congress"

The Greek leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis, on the other hand, enjoyed a benevolent silence from his colleagues in misdeeds during the European summit, while (yet another) political scandal broke out in mid-June in Greece. It was revealed, by a provocative promotional spot, that the “First Panhellenic Congress of Fertility and Reproductive Autonomy” was being prepared for the beginning of July in Iannina. The aim of this congress was to “To highlight the value and importance of information around fertility issues, to present the current situation, which clearly shows that the birth deficit is ravaging contemporary society, with the main reason being the lack of knowledge on fertility issues.” And as a bonus, the message hammered home was to shame women who prefer to work, selfishly forgetting that after 40 it is too late to contribute to the national destiny!

The participants in this congress, whose steering committee was obviously composed of four men, were divided between doctors from gynaecological departments in two or three hospitals, journalists... and ecclesiastics, the Greek Orthodox Church having recently distinguished itself scientifically by establishing an annual day devoted to the “unborn child”. The participation of clergymen was not symbolic but massive, since for example the animation of the workshop “Role of the decentralized administration in the protection of fertility” was entrusted almost exclusively to priests... And the scandal of such a congress aiming at forbidding women to decide for themselves does not stop there: In the workshops, we also find: “Ministry of the Interior: fertility, central axis of development”, with the minister himself, Makis Voridis, former head of the youth of the colonels’ junta (1967-1974), as speaker! In fact, this congress at least had the active support of the government, and in any case, it corresponds to the dangerously reactionary wind that the right-wing of Mitsotakis junior is imposing, notably in national education with, for example, replacing sociology by... religion classes.

“What a scandal”

The scandal goes even further: in their search for support, it seems that the brilliant enlightened leaders forgot to inform their interlocutors of the real content of the famous congress. The singer Kaiti Garbi explained (to the newspaper *Ef Syn*) that she saw the advertisement and was shocked. “It presented women as part of the reproductive process without giving them the right to free choice. What a scandal!” Even worse: the organizers had arranged for the congress to be hosted by the President of the Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou. After the screening of the spot and the reactions, she withdrew her support for this sinister symposium of nostalgic women’s subjugation and big business doctors abusing their power against women. The latter aspect was not lacking either: while it is known that doctors in Greece abuse caesarean sections in order to be able to charge more, the congress also had as its perspectives the development of artificial reproduction methods within the framework of medical tourism called for by the Minister of Development, Adonis Georgiadis, who also comes from the fascist extreme right...

Following the broadcasting of the advert, reactions abounded, between campaigns on social networks and various statements. The personalities solicited withdrew or felt obliged to withdraw their support, and the same goes for organizations or businesses, TV channels or banks. It must be said that the continuation of this congress could have given rise to massive reactions against such a provocation: because at the same time, the reality for women is feminicides, rapes, and also the consequences of the slavery-like law on working time voted on 16 June, the effect of which will be to make it even more difficult for women and men to be more available to their children. And following the numerous withdrawals of support, following very critical articles even in the right-wing press, the congress was finally cancelled.

“Purity of the Greek people”?

The other worrying aspect of this congress, noted by our comrades of NAR in their newspaper *PRIN*, is what is hidden behind the real obsession with a “demographic problem”: why not immediately give Greek nationality to all immigrants and refugees in Greece, many of whom are very young? Behind this question, whose answer is based on a nationalism congenital to the right but relatively shared by the left, we find the obsession with the “purity of the Greek people”. So the response of workers’ organizations and the left to this obscurantist offensive worthy of the Middle Ages cannot be limited to the necessary demands that favour the choice of having - or not having - children: reduction of working hours, information on contraception, sex education in schools, resources for public hospitals, reinforcement of public aid to families... The right of refugees and immigrants to live and work with dignity in Greece, to have children with the same rights as children of Greek families (this year there have been many cases of refugee children being prevented from attending school) is a fundamental battle for an internationalist response, based on the principle of the fundamental right of women to have a child if they want, when they want.

Athens, 29 June 2021

PS:

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