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Environment

In defence of Greta Thunberg

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The young Swedish woman Greta Thunberg has faced an exceptional outpouring of hatred that translates into the most vile macho attacks, the most sordid insinuations about her mental health, the lowest calumnies about her autonomy, and even barely veiled death threats. [1]

The author of the *Impossibility of Green Capitalism* and numerous articles for Contretemps, Daniel Tanuro looks back at this campaign, which began immediately after the media highlighted the action of the young girl who accuses the business community of being responsible for climate change and governments of doing nothing commensurate with the threat and the extreme urgency of responding to it.

You don't have to look far to find the source of these ever-growing waves of hatred. This source is the national-populist, climate denying, sexist, racist and antisemitic extreme right-wing. It is spreading like a cancer, especially since the election of Trump, Brexit, and the successes of the German AfD, the French FN/RN and the Italian Lega, among others. The photoshop montages showing Greta alongside financier Georges Soros or a fighter of the Islamic state clearly show the antisemitic or Islamophobic intentions of these circles.

The links of this extreme right with fossil capital are proven, in particular through the European Institute for Climate and Energy (EIKE). EIKE collaborates with the Heartland Institute, a US climate denying think tank funded by the oil sector and the Koch Group (the most powerful private company in the US, active in the fossil fuel sector and chemicals, violently climate denying). If we dig a little deeper, we find in the campaign against Greta Thunberg all the nebula of collaborators in reactionary think tanks and other climate denying "institutes" funded by Exxon and Chevron. Notably the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) from which Myron Ebell, a member of the Trump transition team at the head of the EPA, Breitbart News, etc., came.

The main themes of the charge against Greta Thunberg are the same on both sides of the Atlantic: that she goes back to school to learn what she doesn't know; that she is a puppet in the hands of Al Gore and green capitalism; that those who pull the strings use disabled children to impose a dictatorship of emotion; that she calls for a strike because the world is over, that's totalitarianism; that poor girl is an illuminated woman, a sick woman, etc. [2]

Most of these elements were present in the commentary of Jordan Bardella (FN/RN) during Greta's visit to the French National Assembly.

We can see that climate denial does not explain everything, far from it. The hatred against Greta Thunberg is all the more vicious as the target is a woman, and a young woman. A young woman who is not afraid to accept herself as she is, with, as she herself explains, her different personality [3]. A brave, determined, intelligent, sensitive young woman who knows what she's talking about. A young woman who expresses herself very clearly, in the name of youth, in the name of the future, and does not hesitate to face the powerful with cheerful insolence. In a word: a witch.

When it comes to attacking a woman, what some call the "tradition of liberty" often makes France, unfortunately, the place where the most pestilential unpleasant smells are released. Those from Bernard Pivot's exceed everything [4] Given the character's academic distinctions, this is an opportunity to recall this historical phrase: "Sir, you're just a piece of shit in a silk stocking". By meditating on this political reality: sexism and machismo always build a bridge to the far right.

At first, the representatives of capital focused on the recuperation of Greta Thunberg and, through her, the

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neutralization of youth. Hence the invitation to Davos, the European Parliament, the National Assembly and many other official venues. Since she was calling for the unity of all against the threat, in the name of science, politicians thought they would put her in their pockets and show her that they were doing their best, etc. But Greta Thunberg wasn't fooled. Already in the European Parliament, after Juncker kissed her on the hand (!), she said: "Politicians don't want to talk to us? Neither do we."

It is important to tell the whole truth and the truth, in this case, is that a significant part of the left and the ecological community howled with the wolves. Under the most diverse pretexts: "Greta is not anti-capitalist", "Greta is not against growth", "Greta is a star", "It is not by chance that she is invited here or there", "Greta plays the game of green capitalism", etc. Not to mention the two-bit psychiatric experts. And all this, at the bottom, for only one, central reason: their rage at being shown up by a fifteen-year-old girl, out of nowhere, who has done more in one year to change the climate (without pun intended) than many militant structures in thirty years...

Today, there is no doubt about it: after Greta's performance at the UN, the dominant parties will change their tactics. She pilloried them all without hesitation ("How dare you? You only talk about money"), and her message had a maximum impact worldwide. Faced with the failure of the summit, she once again called for strikes. As a result, the attempts to recuperate are over, there is no more laughing..

The turning point is clearly visible in France: Macron blames Greta Thunberg for "antagonizing our societies", advises young people to take "citizen" actions rather than strike, or to go to Poland to demonstrate against the climate denier Duda. As for LVMH's CEO, Bernard Arnault, he went to the front line to blame the young Swedish woman for "demoralizing youth" (same argument as Bardella) in the face of the bright prospects of green capitalism. "How dare he?" Does this individual believe that the fortune he has made in the luxury industry for the rich "give hope" to anyone?

Incredible as it may seem, given the context, powerful people are concerned, even worried. They fear an abyssal rupture between youth and the old world. Their world. That of politics in the service of the rich, of competition between nations, of capitalism that destroys nature and life. They fear that the global youth movement, as it expands, will lead to other layers: peasants, exploited people, indigenous people whose forests are sacked, the oppressed in general. Impossible? Who knows? Who knows? The call of the Greta generation resonates deeply, because the 99% do not like the idea that our children's world will be worse than ours... except for the 1% who are responsible for the disaster.

Since she refuses to come into line, they are prepared to use any means against the symbol of this movement, Greta Thunberg. The media that carried her to the pinnacle will drag her through the mud, the politicians who tried to use her will hand her over to the executioner for witchcraft and the far right will offer themselves to do the job.

The hatred against this young woman is an expression of the struggle of the dominators for their domination. The fight against youth and women, of course. But also against employees, peasants, racialized people, indigenous peoples, different people, and the living in general. Class struggle in the Anthropocene era.

Whatever Greta Thunberg's limitations, our place is at her side, in the struggle she has constantly promoted and which it is now a matter of democratically organizing. It is the place of the left and even of any ecology worthy of the name. Get your hands off Greta Thunberg!

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[1] "Recreational boating accidents occur in August": for example, the British businessman, Trump's ally and Farage funder Arron Banks, commented on the fact that Greta Thunberg was sailing across the Atlantic to attend the United Nations Climate Change Summit.

[2] For an anthology of the insults heard in the French media, read Samuel Gontier's article, [Haro sur Greta Thunberg, la démoniaque vestale hitléro-maoïste](#).

[3] It should be recalled that the Austrian psychiatrist Asperger, who gave his name to the syndrome, was a Nazi. Responsible for the murder of disabled children, Asperger had developed a test to determine which ones to save because he thought their abilities could be useful....

[4] He is the author of this tweet: "In my generation, boys were looking for little Swedish girls who had the reputation of being less uptight than little French girls. I can imagine our astonishment, our fear, if we had approached a Greta Thunberg."