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Netherlands

The Cult of the Oranges

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The dynamism of the class struggle in the twentieth century shows itself in the demise of the institution of monarchy. At the beginning of the twentieth century the majority of the people of the earth lived under the rule of a monarch.

At the beginning of the twenty first century only the Scandinavian countries, Britain, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, Spain, the greater part of the Arab Peninsula, Morocco, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Nepal, Tonga and Japan and some marginal quasi-independent countries like Swaziland, Lesotho, and Bhutan have a monarch as their head of state.

There exists a distinct pattern as to why these countries have remained monarchies. The Scandinavian countries, Britain, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg are extremely stable imperialist countries that either stayed neutral or were on the victorious side in the two imperialist world wars. Monarchism among the masses is always identification with the powerful, the belief that things will stay as they are, so it is very difficult for a monarchy to survive defeat in a war.

These countries also show that it is fetishist to believe that monarchism brings political stability to a country, when it is just the other way around, countries who were relatively stable in the twentieth century have kept their monarchy. Although it is interestingly this fetishism that explains why Spain - hardly a stable capitalist country in the twentieth century - became a monarchy again after the death of Franco. The Spanish monarchy is a joint venture of genuine conservative monarchists and the fetishist beliefs of social democrats that wanted their country to be just as stable and prosperous as Denmark, Sweden or Holland.

The Moroccan monarchy survived only thanks to the French occupation of the country, not because of the religious hold it has supposedly always held on the Moroccan people. It is clear that the French occupation forestalled a bourgeois revolution just as happened in other countries on the periphery of the imperialist heartland like Turkey or Mexico. The monarchies of the Arab Peninsula are the symbols of pseudo nations, created and sponsored by imperialism, to prevent the income generated by oil being shared by all Arabs.

Monarchy persisted in Swaziland, Lesotho, Nepal and Bhutan thanks to the extreme underdeveloped character of these societies and also due to the interest British Imperialism had in maintaining some sort of presence in these areas after the independence of India and South Africa.

Japan and Thailand are certainly countries where the role of the monarchy is more complicated than can be described in a short article like this.

Holland is one of the countries where the monarchy as an institution and monarchism - Orangeism, after the house of Orange - as a popular ideology, has stayed strong throughout the twentieth century. The strength of the monarchy in Holland - and this is true for many monarchies throughout the world - lies in the fact that, precisely because the monarch is constitutionally forbidden to speak in public about political issues, every one can project their own views of the way the queen really is onto the institution.

Dutch housewives can imagine the queen as loving mother and perfect host in the royal palace, Dutch gays can fancy the queen as a camp personality with a liberal attitude towards gay rights, Dutch social-democrats can see the queen as someone with a soft spot in her heart for the working person, Dutch conservatives can see her as a woman

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who is also worried about the lack of discipline and the lack of respect for authority in the kingdom.

Most of the Dutch, who think of themselves as hard working, honest and democratic people, take great pride in the lack of conspicuous consumption and public display of the Dutch monarchy. And many of the Dutch can probably most easily identify with the image of a poor queen who has spent a long working day with her ministers and exclaims: "What a bunch of boring creeps".

Since every Dutchman can imagine the queen as being perfect according to his own moral standards there always lingers the dangers that the queen becomes exposed, that the difference between the way the queen really is and the way she is imagined becomes too big. This isn't that difficult since the nineteenth century Oranges lived and thought like German Junkers (nobility) and their twentieth century descendants as American billionaires. This has resulted in a range of minor and major scandals.

The latest of these has been the desire of the Dutch heir to the throne, 34-year-old Willem Alexander to marry Maxima Zorreguieta, the daughter of a former junior minister of agriculture in the Argentine military dictatorship headed by Jorge Videla.