

# borderless

an anticapitalist journal

www.grenzeloos.org · Published in the Netherlands · January 2014 · Number 4

## Editorial Now is the time

We have entered into a period of global social, economic and political unrest. From Greece, Brazil and Tunisia to Egypt, Spain, the US, and Turkey societies are in turmoil and people are in revolt. In each of these countries (and so many more) policies of austerity, privatization and deregulation have funnelled vast wealth to the very top while stripping away essential social services and undermining economic security for the vast majority. After fifty years of dismantling social welfare and checks on corporate power, the fruits of neoliberal capitalism are being harvested worldwide. For the 99% it isn't going well. Rising poverty and inequality, growing fear and desperation, and expanding oligarchy have combined with a massive global economic crisis to destroy the livelihoods of billions of people and torpedo democratic institutions.

Although the Netherlands has not experienced the kind of economic and social disasters that have befallen billions of others around the world, we need only look around us – to the East, West, South or North (take your pick) – to see where we are headed. Billions have already been cut from the national budget in recent years. And then here comes the King (arriving literally in a golden carriage) to announce, even as the rich get ever-richer, that there simply isn't enough money to pay for such 'luxuries' as social security or elder-care anymore. The welfare state is over, he tells us. Billions more must be cut. Vital social services will have to be slashed. Wages and pensions slashed. Health care subsidies slashed. Assistance for the poor, the elderly and students slashed. Support for

the arts slashed. In the new 'Participatory Society', it's everyone-for-him/herself.

And yet the Dutch public, while opposed to these cuts, remains largely passive.

The announcement of the new (blindingly Orwellian) 'Participatory Society' makes two things perfectly clear: One, previous claims by the ruling parties that cuts were necessary to 'save the welfare state' were lies – the agenda from the start has been ideological and the goal is to destroy the welfare state. We are not witnessing the end of the welfare state but its assassination. And two, the strategy of cooperation and collaboration with the ruling political parties and financial elites – the polder model – has failed us. A new strategy of resistance and direct action is needed.

There are encouraging signs. Cleaners, healthcare workers and refugees have mounted impressive campaigns to protect their (and all of our) interests and garnered wide public support. The Occupy movement showed us that we are not alone in our indignation. In September, a 'Stop the Cuts' demonstration in Amsterdam drew 5000 people. And the trade unions mobilised for a massive demonstration on November 30 in Utrecht against the new austerity budget.

These events are heartening but they must be just the beginning of a much larger, sustained movement to turn the political and economic tide. It is time for workers, students, retirees and the rest of the 99% to get organized, get into the streets, and demand an end to these policies of destruction and exploitation.

If not now, when?

## Netherlands Big cuts, little resistance

– Willem Bos

The Dutch government published its budget on the third Tuesday of September as is the tradition. This budget means a loss in purchasing power for the majority of the population while unemployment rises. After several years of drastic cuts, the government announced six billion more in cuts. People with low incomes, those on benefits, and the elderly will especially feel the results. In polls, support for the governing parties keeps declining yet resistance against its austerity policies is limited.

As in the rest of Europe, the economic crisis of 2008 led to a deep and sustained slump in the Dutch economy. Dozens of billions of euros were used to save the banks, adding to the budget deficit. The financial crisis turned into an economic crisis and economic growth turned into stagnation or decline.

Austerity measures have led to decreased government and consumer spending which has only worsened the economic problem. This government, like previous governments, is trying to make the population pay for this crisis – a crisis which they did not cause.

Benefits are to be cut and wages frozen for public sector workers, meaning their real income will decline at the rate of inflation even as rent becomes more expensive. But the rich won't have to pay taxes for over 100.000 euros gifts if those are used to pay

for mortgages or refurbishing houses. The government also found four billion euro to buy 38 Joint Strike Fighter planes. Meanwhile, the gap between rich and poor continues to grow.

The budget deficit is expected to reach 3.3 per cent, higher than the EU limit of 3 per cent. To reach the 3 per cent goal, not six but nine billion in cuts would be needed. The Netherlands were given permission for this by EU budget czar Olli Rhen. It's an ironic development considering the country always insisted countries in South Europe had to stick to the letter

on the shoulders of individuals. Old people will have to live at home longer and become more dependent on aid from family or neighbors. Collective mechanisms are replaced by market mechanisms, creating new possibilities to make profit.

According to polls, if there were elections now, the ruling VVD would lose over half its seats (from 42 to 18) and the PvdA almost three quarters of its seats (38 to 10) out of a total of 150. The coalition already lacks a majority in the Senate needed to approve bills. Most of the opposition, the christian-

democratic CDA, the liberal D66 and in essence also the Greens, supports the government goals of reducing spending and tearing down the welfare-state. But this so-called 'constructive opposition' is also afraid to lose votes to the Socialist Party on the left, which would grow from 15 to 24



Prime-minister Rutte tries to sell austerity as 'participation' to Geert Wilders and SP leader Emile Roemer - 'Het Land Van Pannekoek'

of the EU budget regulations. The people of Greece, Portugal and Spain have to bleed but Dutch politicians demand special privileges.

### Participation society

The government, consisting of the right-wing liberal VVD and the Labour Party (PvdA) aim to replace the welfare-state with what they call 'the participatory society'. This means public resources like healthcare or homes for the elderly are decreased and the burden is put

seats according to polls, and the right-wing, populist, Islamophobic PVV of Geert Wilders on the right, which stands at 27 seats in the polls, as against its current 15.

Despite the limited appeal of the government plans, resistance to them is limited – so far. An anti-austerity protest in September drew thousands and was supported by the SP and found sympathy among trade unionists. The trade-unions in turn are planning a large rally for November 30 in Utrecht. This shows the potential for a stronger fight-back.

## Arab spring in Egypt The struggle for democracy and social justice

– Melanie Henry

Egyptian business leaders, whether Islamist or Christian, supporters of civilian democracy or partisans of the Mubarak regime, agree with the military on one point: maintenance of the neoliberal order. To make Egypt attractive to investors and seduce its creditors, the ruling class opened huge portions of the market to competition and worked to ensure a cheap and docile labour force.

But by the mid-2000s, this situation had become unbearable for much of the population, triggering a wave of social unrest, culminating in the January 25 revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak. The recurring slogan in these protests – *Bread, Freedom, Social Justice* – shows a radicalisation of the populace but also a political indeterminacy, which reflects the difficulty of defining a new political field

after decades of dictatorship.

When they won the election in 2012, Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) took the test of power and failed. They attempted to secure their power and their place in the international scene as respectable members of the global bourgeoisie. In classic dictatorship-style, they tried to control state institutions through imposition and violence, by censoring critics and smashing resistance. They quickly abandoned even the pretence of representing the revolutionary movement.

Deteriorating living conditions in the ensuing months led to a street-protest movement against the MB, with protesters ranging from those nostalgic for the stability of the Mubarak era to those seeking vengeance against the MB for its betrayal of the revolution. The violence of the crack-down on protestors as well as a series of authoritarian

constitutional amendments implemented by the Morsi government made late 2012 a turning point. At this crucial moment, the political forces which could have pressed the revolutionary demands for social justice – the Nasserist Popular Tendency, and the leftist Popular Alliance – chose instead to join the liberals and the remnants of the Mubarak regime in the National Salvation Front (against Islamism) supporting the coup d'état, thus putting the revolutionary ambitions of the working class behind the ousting of Morsi.

The June 30<sup>th</sup> movement and the military coup that followed polarised the political atmosphere. The army split the political field, reducing it to a question of 'with the people or with the terrorists and gained the support of most of the political opposition and the popular movement, including

(continues on the next page)

## What is borderless?

**borderless** is a radical paper written in English for non-Dutch speakers interested in Dutch progressive politics. It provides news and commentary from an anti-capitalist perspective on Dutch politics and on events and social struggles in the Netherlands and around the world.

**borderless** is written and published by a collection of Dutch and non-Dutch activists living in Amsterdam. We consider ourselves socialists, feminists and ecologists and we seek anti-capitalist solutions to the many economic and ecological crises facing working people worldwide. We oppose capitalism, a political-economic system that is based on exploitation and whose increasingly frequent crises are devastating communities around the globe. We oppose all attacks on the civil and human rights of citizens, immigrants, workers, and minorities both inside and outside the Netherlands. We stand in solidarity with all people engaged in the struggle against exploitation and oppression

**borderless** is a supplement to our sister magazine, Grenzeloos, published by SAP, the Dutch section of the Fourth International.

### Join us!

If you are interested in what we do, feel free to contact us at [borderless@grenzeloos.org](mailto:borderless@grenzeloos.org), visit our website: [www.grenzeloos.org/borderless-an-anticapitalist-journal](http://www.grenzeloos.org/borderless-an-anticapitalist-journal) and to like our [facebook page](#). We appreciate comments on our articles, proposals or contributions for our next issue, and interesting events to add to our agenda!

We meet regularly to discuss current political issues, our involvement in social movements and how to put our ideas into practice. If you are interested you are welcome!

the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade-Unions (EFITU). EFITU's president became minister of labour in the temporary puppet government, siding with officials from the Mubarak-era and adopting the old nationalist rhetoric, claiming it was time to stop the strikes and build the country.

Egyptians now face a revival of authoritarian Nasserist-style rule. The bloody repression of the MB will not eliminate the Islamist tendency but it may push it towards extra-legal and violent methods, which has already provided the army with an excuse to implement a state of emergency and crush protests in the name of stability, just as in the old days.

Workers and revolutionary groups have already begun to face brutal repression of strikes and the arrest of political activists but the Egyptian people have shown their capacity to transform their political situation and the polarising rhetoric between the army and MB is less and less relevant to the public. There is a third voice in Egypt – that of leftists, including the Revolutionary Socialists – who reject both the MB and the army and who continue to fight for the revolutionary ambitions of 'bread, freedom and social justice'. They are struggling under harsh conditions but they have undeniable potential and they deserve our support.

## Turkey and Brazil

# Just the beginning



### - Maral Jefroudi

This summer something interesting happened - people took to the streets in two countries that are widely considered 'economic success-stories', Brazil and Turkey. GDP figures show that more wealth was created in these two countries in the last ten years than ever before. But instead of peace and harmony, we have seen widespread protest in both countries. How do we explain this?

In a recent interview regarding the protests in Turkey, sociologist Michael Löwy pointed to the similarities between our time and the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Back then the state used violence to expel peasant farmers from their land so it could be used commercially. Similarly today, we are seeing the privatization of the last commons, of public spaces and resources to ensure the continued accumulation of capital. "The answer to permanent accumulation,"

argues Löwy, "is permanent revolution."

The unrest in both Brazil and Turkey is a response to structural income inequalities and crises of representation in the state. Marx's idea of "primitive accumulation" can be useful in understanding the way structural inequalities were formed. The idea was developed as a counterpoint to what Adam Smith called "original accumulation", referring to the gathering of wealth of by the first capitalists. For Smith, the early division of labor paved the way for an increase in production that led naturally and peacefully to an accumulation of wealth and the birth of capitalism. Marx, on the other hand, argued that capitalism was not born of the savings of efficiently working people, but started with the violent expropriation of large segments of the population of their means of sufficiency, forcing them to become workers for wealthy elites. One of the main pillars

of this expropriation was the closure of common lands to the people who were cultivating them. More recently, David Harvey introduced the term "accumulation by dispossession" to describe an ongoing process of the centralization of wealth and power in the hands of a few achieved by disposing of the 99% of their rights and wealth. Privatization and financialization are two prominent elements of this process.

When we look at Turkey and Brazil today, we see this process at work. In both cases, a construction boom has led to the expulsion of working class citizens from neighborhoods deemed to have significant "market value." And while no investment is being made in public facilities for education, recreation or political participation, "mega-projects" such as the coming Olympic Games, which Rio will host in 2016, are heavily funded by the state and private sector. This 'commoditization of the

city' invites people to be part of the city only as consumers. Prime Minister Erdogan said this plainly when he asked protestors to leave the Gezi Park to its real "owners" – the tourists.

In Brazil, protests were triggered by a bus-fare increase, coupled with anger over corruption and evictions. In Turkey, the spark was an attempt to demolish Gezi Park and replace it with a shopping mall. Shopping malls are rapidly replacing the public spaces in Turkey. Mustafa Sonmez, an economist from Turkey, has shown that it is not productive industry that has accumulated the largest share of GDP growth over the last ten years, but sectors like construction and finance. These sectors are protected from competition by the state, demonstrating the incestuous relationship between the state and private elites. The vast number of empty apartments in the outskirts of Istanbul are indicators that this kind of economic growth is not sustainable.

It is not only in the economic realm that people are made increasingly powerless. They are also excluded from decision-making processes. In Turkey, government-initiated restrictions on the purchase of alcohol and the right to abortion, along with severe political repression over the last decade, have added to the crisis of representation the state now faces. The protest movements in both countries have opened channels for a more participatory democracy. In Brazil, the demonstrations against the bus-fare increase not only forced the state to restore the old price but also triggered a wider discussion about reform of the transportation system. Recent protests over the FIFA visit to Brazil, teachers' demands for better pay in Rio and Sao Paulo, and the continuing demonstrations against gentrification and against the demolition of public commons in Istanbul and Ankara are reflected in the popular slogan of the resistance in Turkey: "This is just the beginning, the struggle will continue."

## What's going on?

12 January 20:00

### Mehmet Polat Trio

Turkish and Persian melodies; padded in Balkan rhythms and infused with African grooves 7 euro.

@ Mezrab, Veemkade 572D, Amsterdam

19 January 20:00

### Movie: The Spook Who Sat by the Door (1973)

In the 1970s the Black Power movement in America was a serious threat to the establishment... and then here comes along this movie which depicts the story of a "negro officer" who is enlisted into the CIA to learn their tactics of war, only to return back to Chicago to train a gang of urban "freedom fighters".

@ Joe's Garage, Pretoriusstraat 43, Amsterdam

20 January 20:00

### Benefit dinner Stichting Kaikoesie

Kaikoesie Foundation 's main goal is to protect the Indigenous people and heritage in Suriname by creating awareness of the disastrous environmental consequences of current practices of gold mining in Suriname.

@ Joe's Garage, Pretoriusstraat 43, Amsterdam

24-26 January

### 11th International Symposium against Isolation

For bread, justice and freedom: Let's transport the spirit of resistance from Gezi Park to the world.

See: [www.ipai-isolation.info](http://www.ipai-isolation.info)

31 Jan - 2 Feb

### 2dh5: History as inspiration for the movement

International activist symposium

See: <http://www.2dh5.nl>

## Greece

# Who guards the guardians?

*The kindergartens and the day nurseries are filled with migrants while Greeks cannot even go inside. Enough is enough!...Migrants are tyrants!...Since the Dorian invasion 4000 years ago, Greece has not faced an invasion of such a scale as today's immigration.*

### - Yannis Tzaninis

The statements above are not statements of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn (GD) party but of the Greek prime minister and other prominent officials of the ruling New Democracy (ND) party. Members of ND have occasionally expressed a desire to collaborate with GD, claiming that the GD fascists at worst "curse or smack some people around". Some ND members have a history of fascist activities themselves. ND parliamentarian Makis Voridis once served as leader of the youth branch of the pro-junta party EPEN after current GD leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos resigned from the position. The government's rhetoric and public attitude towards the Greek Nazis however shifted suddenly after leftist rapper Pavlos Fyssas was murdered by members of GD. A crackdown on the organisation has since brought it to its knees, with its leader and second-in-command imprisoned.

### Fascism in the making

The history of GD began with Michaloliakos who, while

in prison, met the colonels of the 1970s-junta and became a sympathizer. In 1980 he started publishing the magazine "Golden Dawn" and in 1985 organized the party of the same name. GD's presence was trivial until 1993 when rising tension between Greece and Macedonia allowed GD to parade itself as a defender of Greek nationalism. Prior to 2012 GD had never won more than 0.29% of the vote in any election, but in May 2012 it received 7% (almost half a million votes) and preserved this percentage in a subsequent election. Until recently it held 18 seats out of 300, the fifth largest party in parliament.

Since 2009, GD's strategy has focused on anti-immigration rhetoric and action. They adopted tactics like escorting elderly Greeks to get their pension checks, opening cheap groceries ("only for Greeks") and eventually assaulting immigrants and randomly checking ID cards. Most of their activity took place (literally) in the dark because of negative public responses to their presence. An example of how their covert actions evolved is the tactics of the death squad that murdered Fyssas. After Fyssas was spotted publically, dozens of GD

members rushed to the site and the chief assassin stabbed him in both the stomach and heart like a professional killer.

Intimidation and violence have always been the dominant methods of GD. Several members of the party have previous or pending charges for violent crimes. A 2004 report by the Greek intelligence agency revealed that a large number of GD members were armed, often with weapons provided by the ruling ND party which employed them as bodyguards. Moreover, GD has strong relations with former and current army and police officers. The violence of GD has now become institutionalized in political life and is condoned by a large portion of the Greek bourgeoisie. Research on GD voters' profiles shows them to be relatively well-educated and often part of the petit-bourgeoisie (19% small businesses owners voted for GD). Many employers threaten to call in GD when employees react against being overworked or under paid.

Despite its demagogy, GD has not challenged the government's neoliberal reforms or other pro-business provisions. There are many examples of how the Greek government

and state resemble GD. A few months ago, a Syrian-Palestinian refugee asked the police for help to find his family, missing due to a wildfire. He was arrested for having no documents and detained for more than a month. When he was eventually released he learned his family had died in the fire. In addition to herding undocumented immigrants and refugees into detention camps, the Greek government has also been swift in implementing neoliberal reforms and repressing strikes. Austerity measures, adopted all over the EU, are applied *in extremis* in Greece.

The recent crackdown may have dealt GD a serious blow, but fascism is now well-rooted in Greece and EU rhetoric and policies regarding immigration and social welfare are fanning the flames. Michaloliakos will probably not write his own 'Mein Kampf' in jail and Greece will definitely not invade Poland. Nonetheless when a member of GD was recently arrested, the arresting officer was heard apologising and saying he would be honoured to have the Greek Nazis as his leaders.