

EUROPE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

(extracts of the exhaustive program of VIVANT))

a. Foreign policy in Europe

Belgian foreign policy can very well follow that of the European Union. The time when each European country had “its own” area of influence in the third world is well and truly over.

Belgium, as the centre of the European Union, has a front-line role to play. It would also be to Belgium’s advantage if a democratic, regional and federal Europe realized to the full all its opportunities for profound unification, **including on the social level**. It is therefore of prime importance that an advanced process of democratisation is introduced, very soon, in the European institutions and in the decision-taking process. The influence of the European Parliament should be increased.

b. Development Cooperation

Vivant doubts whether development cooperation is effective as it is being done today. Vivant is against “regulated” aid because it can be **the source of corruption and disloyal competition**. When Western aid is given because the goods or services it provides are not available locally, it should be consequent upon a European public tender, and should be open to European and non-European companies that can give sufficient financial guarantees for seeing through the project.

According to Vivant, more efficient forms of development cooperation would consist of:

- the enlargement of commercial opportunities, so that the beneficiary country creates its own instrument of prosperity;
- assistance providing adequate management for the execution of development projects, with partners (local ones for example) that enjoy the confidence of the local population;
- support to initiatives that provide small-scale capital in the form of loans to the local population (micro-credit).

In addition, it is necessary to:

- ensure that foreign investments do not favour development inequalities;
- accept as candidates for development aid only countries whose military power has been reduced to a minimum, so that democracy can be established securely without jeopardising sovereignty;
- organise experiments with a Basic Income equivalent (for example, a Basic Income paid out in food) in small isolated communities.

The regular (monthly) distribution of a Basic Income in the third world necessitates effective financial control and social guidance in order to avoid embezzlement of funds.

c. Basic Income in Third World Countries

Vivant also supports the movement in favour of releasing third world countries from their debts. Most of these debts have been contracted by authoritarian regimes. Banks granted credits without properly examining the risks. In general, the population of the beneficiary countries was not able to participate in the decision and the people were not the ones to benefit from the credits awarded by the banks. It is therefore not fair that these populations should suffer a fall in living standards in order to reimburse the debts.

Vivant also believes that **the introduction of a Basic Income in third world countries** may be the best way to spend the budget devoted to development cooperation. It is possible to give a basic income of €40 to each Nicaraguan with only 1% of our GNP. In Nicaragua, with a population of about 2.5 million, these €40 are equivalent to €250 in Belgium, since basic products are cheaper. In this way, local markets are created, as buying power is increased. A Basic Income grants greater autonomy and space for own initiative to those who receive it.

Another possibility is to tax heavily the industrial products imported into these countries, as they are often bought by wealthy people. This would provide partial funding for the Basic Income for the whole population.

d. Importance of a Basic Income for the Third World

In June 2001, in São Paulo (pop. 17 million), Brazil, Martha Suplicy, mayor of the city since January 2001, introduced a Basic Income for low wage earners and those with no income. This is accompanied by social aid in the form of management education and protection against theft.

Her ex-husband, Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, federal senator of the state of Sao Paulo for the workers' party, has declared:

“Basic income is an efficient arm against the economic unfreedom that pushes people into accepting semi-slavery working conditions or into seeking work in unfavourable regions. It is an efficient means in the battle against organised crime (illegal drugs trade, human trafficking) and breaks the vicious circle of poverty and illiteracy.”

P.S. And **on 8 January 2004** the President of Brazil **Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva** formally sanctioned this project in the course of a ceremony attended by many personalities, including Professor Philippe Van Parijs. **Brazil** thus became the first country where the national legislature has passed **a law introducing a citizen's income.**