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Book review

A book that reads almost like a thriller

- Reviews section -

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Originally published in French and in Greek in March 2020 under the title [Capitulation entre Adultes](#), the book will be available in English before the end of 2020. The book looks back at Syriza coming to power in Greece in January 2015 and the ensuing six months, marked as they were by stark confrontation between the new Greek government and the European Union. As scientific coordinator of the debt audit, alongside the President of the Hellenic Parliament, Éric Toussaint had a grandstand view of events. He criticises the government's policies and explains that there was plenty of scope for different strategies.

Threats, blackmail, blockades

The story reads almost like a thriller. Events are recounted in detail, day by day, following the thread of the book *Adults in the Room* by Yanis Varoufakis, Minister of Finance at the time, who tells of the tussles in the wings. It is rather like having two perspectives on the same events.

First of all, the European leaders are clearly depicted in all their brutality and cynicism. The Troika (the ECB, European Commission and the IMF) literally destroys a government elected to fight austerity.

Threats, blackmail, blockades: the German, French, Dutch and other leaders would stop at nothing to prevent the slightest attempt to introduce social measures. (See also the Costa-Gavras film, *Adults in the Room*).

However the European Union's anti-democratic violence cannot entirely explain the failure of the Greek government. Éric Toussaint talks of "capitulation" because other choices could have been made. Even in Varoufakis' account, it is clear that the confrontation with the Troika was not really battled out to the end.

In Éric Toussaint's view, it is important to understand this terrible experiment and to look back at what happened, so that the policies that an anti-capitalist or radical left-wing government should implement may be formulated.

A power relationship has to be built. In the first place, there needs to be social mobilisation to encourage direct intervention from the population to reverse the balance of power and impose a radical anti-liberal programme. There is no other way. Varoufakis' book clearly shows that by allowing themselves to be drawn into secret negotiations, Tsipras and Varoufakis isolated themselves from the rest of the government and their party, and gave the public no inkling of what was going on, at a time when the population was engaged in the struggle. This gave the Troika plenty of room for *manœuvre*.

Then there was the possibility of alerting the populations and activists in other European countries, thus embracing an internationalist strategy, which is another unavoidable move if there is to be radical change.

Finally there was the programme, the fundamental measures not simply to be demanded but to be actually implemented. To Éric Toussaint (an expert in the field) the central issue is to gain control of the banks by expropriating and socialising them, so that they can be overseen by the population. Then, hand in hand with that, comes the cancellation of public debt.

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Not to mention the inevitable break from the institutions of this Europe for capitalists.

There is no need to list the measures as the book does it in detail, throughout the narrative, explaining why they are necessary and how they are possible.

This is an excellent book for preparing the struggles of tomorrow, after the end of the lockdown. Struggles that are bound to come. Not a moment too soon.

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