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Greece

The victory of the "no" announces decisive battles against the Troika

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The Secretariat of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International made this statement on 7 July 2015.

The Greek "no" is a resounding slap in the face for the leaders of the Troika, in the first rank of whom are the political leaders of the European conservative and social-democratic parties.

More than 61 per cent of "no" votes - when for more than a week every conceivable means was used to combat such a vote:

• in Europe, with a direct campaign for the "yes" of all the European leaders, press campaigns by the major international media, blackmail by the ECB;

• in Greece, a campaign by the entire press and the private TV stations, disseminating throughout the week polls predicting a victory of the "yes"; blackmail by employers, putting pressure on their employees to participate in "yes" demonstrations and threatening to sack them if the "no" was victorious; and in parallel the position of the trade union bureaucracy linked to PASOK, against the referendum, backed up by the leadership of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) ...

The result is, however, crystal clear: the "no" was the vote of the workers, the unemployed, the popular neighbourhoods of town and country, the youth; the "yes" was the vote of the most privileged layers of society and the most exclusive neighbourhoods of Athens - it was in a majority only in the over-65 age group.

The European leaders could not, as they had done in 2011, when Papandreou abandoned the referendum, prevent a democratic vote where it was not a question of choosing which party would apply the austerity policies dictated by the banks and big business, but of taking a clear position for or against these policies. This vote is unprecedented in Europe.

Whereas Syriza had won 2.2 million votes in January, the "no" gathered 3.5 million votes, with a turnout one per cent less than in January. Even adding on the voters of ANEL and part of those of the fascist Golden Dawn (which called for a "no" vote), the polarization around Syriza brought more than 600,000 votes, accentuating the crisis of the Greek representatives of the Troika, New Democracy (ND), PASOK and To Potami. The crises of PASOK and ND were accentuated, symbolized by the resignation of their leaders within a few days of each other. The hope of the Troika, echoed by all the media, of seeing a "respectable" government take over quickly went up in smoke.

The European leaders have just lost a second round in Greece. Having worn out the traditional parties over five years by an unbearable pressure on the Greek people, they hoped that the arrival of Syriza in January would be a brief interlude of a few weeks before the return of "serious people" to head Greece. After the retreat by Tsipras at the time of the agreement on February 20, they gambled on a quick surrender, and at the end of June, they counted on a victory of the "yes." Merkel and Hollande made the calculation that thanks to the strangulation of the banks, the referendum would bring Tsipras to his knees, forcing him to resign or to submit.

As the third round begins, the reasoning is the same: after the shock of their defeat, the European leaders are bouncing back with their usual arrogance. They say that they "respect" the vote of the Greek people, while announcing that they will not take account of it. They do not intend to change their policies in any way, and for them

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the cancellation of the debt, or even debt relief, is not a subject to be discussed.

There are voices in the camp of the capitalist leaders in favour of accepting at least a partial abandonment of the debt: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) itself recognizes the absurdity of asking Greece to strangle its economy and increase its debt to reimburse the institutions. The US administration is also concerned that pushing Greece out of the euro zone could create both a crisis of the European Union as a whole and a risk of a geostrategic shift on the borders of Europe.

But Angela Merkel and the European leaders want to impose a political defeat on the Greek people and their government. Agreeing to cancel a 300 billion euro debt is clearly not an economic problem: the European Central Bank (ECB) is going to create and inject 1,100 billion euros into the European economy by the end of 2016 to counter deflation.

It is a political choice, because for them it is out of the question to accept that a people, by its sovereign choice, can refuse to implement the decisions of the European institutions.

The proof has just been given to everyone that the European Union and its institutions are not a neutral space or framework. They are political constructions, organized by the capitalists in order to escape from any popular control in the implementation of their interests. This construction will not be reformed. It is illusory to seek to conduct an alternative policy while accepting the sovereignty of these autocratic institutions.

Therefore, in the coming days, with a new relationship of forces, the alternative for the Greek government will be the same as in the previous weeks: accept an agreement that continues and worsens the attacks against the population or take another road, that of a radical break.

Tsipras was ready for more concessions, but what the Troika was aiming for was the liquidation of the Syriza experience. Agreement without capitulation became impossible. This is what led Tsipras to organize the referendum and to rally the Greek people against the diktats of the Troika. The policy of the "international institutions" was overwhelmingly rejected last Sunday. As a result the mandate from the Greek people is unambiguous: it expresses a radical rejection of an agreement that prolongs unemployment, poverty, the dismantling of social rights and public services.

This mandate requires the termination of the payment of the illegitimate and odious debt, a path that, with the nationalization and control of the banking system, gives the Greek people sovereignty over its political, economic and social choices. These are the choices expressed by the Greek left, mainly the left of Syriza and the activists of Antarsya, who contributed to the victory of the "no" to the Troika.

The Greek Communist Party (KKE), by calling for a spoiled ballot, refused to choose between the "no" to the Troika and the "yes" to the international institutions. This is an unacceptable sectarian policy.

The success of the "no" is obviously presented outside of Greece as a "no to Europe" in order to obscure in the eyes of the people of Europe its political significance: it is a "no" to austerity policies.

Despite this, all over Europe, numerous demonstrations of support to the Greek people have taken place. Those who took to the streets were expressing a simple thing: contrary to what official propaganda seeks to inculcate, the interests of the exploited classes in Europe do not lie behind the governments who run the European Union, but on the side of the Greek people and of Syriza, who are fighting austerity.

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Resistance to austerity is possible. The victories of Syriza, like the advances of Podemos in the Spanish state, show the road to take in all the countries of Europe: that of building a political representation of the exploited, against the capitalist diktats.

Throughout the European Union, we must demand the cancellation of the illegitimate debt that is strangling the Greek people and deny all legitimacy to the criminal austerity policies.

The battle has just begun, because what is involved is a clash between the Greek people and, potentially, all the peoples of Europe and the institutions of the Troika. In this battle, the Greeks who have mobilized against austerity will have need of the unity of all their forces against the aggressiveness of the Troika and the European leaders. The workers of Europe, who are being hit by the same policies, will have to mobilize alongside the Greek social and political movement in opposition to austerity, alongside the Greek government in all the measures it may take to resist the diktat of the Troika.