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Greece

Government of national unity: towards further confrontation

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Why suddenly this concern, this confusion (as the faces become serious). Why do the streets, squares, empty so quickly while everyone returns home in great anxiety? Because the barbarians arrive today and these things dazzle the barbarians.” K. Kavafis, “Waiting for the barbarians”

Why all this Greek and international agitation? Why the threats and blackmail, why the Florentine intrigue, why all this Athenian political psychodrama? And why finally the Greek “national union” so much desired by the master cooks in Berlin, Paris, Washington and elsewhere? Why? Well, it's simple: because it was necessary no matter what to prevent the coming of the “barbarians”, the eruption of the Greek masses in revolt on the political scène. Because it was necessary to delay as long as possible the holding of these general elections so much desired by the angry masses and still more feared by the Sacred Alliance of chancellors and bankers.

Indeed, to speak of the panic of the Greek bourgeoisie is to say little. Only a few days ago the then Greek prime minister and president of the Socialist International, Georges Papandreou, manifestly with his back to the wall faced with the nearly unanimous demand for immediate general elections, lost his head in trying to save it, inventing a (phony) referendum and the direct threat of an imaginary military coup! [1] The result was immediate: wholesale panic among his European partners and masters who, totally taken by surprise by the possibility of an uncontrollable referendum in Greece, summed Papandreou to explain himself immediately in Cannes. But the havoc wrought in Europe and above all in Greece by this “adventurist and irresponsible” prime minister were already so enormous that the feared elections seemed inevitable. So how could Papandreou be removed from government while avoiding general elections?

As if by miracle, all the centres of power and the media agreed in record time that salvation lay in a government of national unity of the two big neoliberal parties, PASOK and New Democracy. [2] The political quarrels of yesterday were forgotten, and the Greek “elites” briskly united around a single slogan, that dictated by their European masters: national union before the barbarians benefit irreparably from their disunity, their fears, their contradictions and even their gaffes.

What followed was predictable. Despite his heated résistance Papandreou had to bend to the pressure coming from inside his own a government to form a government of national unity with the New Democracy leader, Antonis Samaras. The Greek right's opposition since the first Memorandum dictated by the troika gave way to cohabitation with PASOK inside the same government imposed by the Troika and Greek big capital.

This government has left no doubt as to its objectives: on the one hand it will push through the state budget and agreement of October 26-27, while on the other it will push elections off for as long as possible. Moreover the recent past of its prime minister is very eloquent: a leading banker, Loucas Papadimos was for a long time vice-president of the European Central Bank (ECB).

Is the crisis over then? No, not at all, but now there is a sizeable difference in relation to the past, the situation is no longer the same because the formation of this government has the great merit of clarifying a Greek political landscape which has long been confused and shrouded by political manÅ“uvres. Now the division is clear between the big and small bourgeois parties supporting the Memorandums and their disastrous austerity, and the left parties who reject and fight them.

Obviously, all would be much clearer and easier if in this deadly confrontation the Greek left was less disunited and

sectarian, more bent on confronting a Greek and international right determined to pursue its nightmarish projects to the end. However there is now a problem which urgently demands a realistic and credible response : what alternative and radical European project not just for the Greek movement but for all the popular resistance in Europe faced with this (terminal?) crisis of the European Union and the veritable war that its leaders wage against their own populations? The Greek case has just shown that exit from the euro (and Europe) does not represent a realistic or credible alternate for these populations in struggle. But in addition, it does not represent a class solution to the class war waged by the European capitalists against employees and pensioners, youth and the unemployed, women and all the oppressed of this continent.

What then? Are we condemned eternally to be on the defensive without ever hoping to go on the counter attack and win? The elaboration of the response should be everybody's business. But in the last analysis one thing is certain, everything will depend on the ability of the popular resistance across Europe to coordinate and fight for the common project of a democratic Europe of the peoples which will have priorities diametrically opposed to the those of the current Europe of the bankers, speculators and capitalists. To work, then, comrades!

[1] A taboo subject for the Greek media which did not whisper a word of it, the preparation of this alleged Greek military coup d'etat must have involved at least the members of the Papandreou government in charge changing the whole general staff of the Greek army, a few days before the comic outcome of this business in Cannes. Of all that however remains one question obviously unanswered: since when are the instigators of such acts implying the armed forces of a country not the object of very heavy penal sanctions?

[2] The preparation with the sustained pressure of the spirits for government of national union caused unprecedented brainwashing on behalf from Greek TV channels. During the three days preceding the formation of the new government, the same twenty-odd professors, journalists, politicians, bankers and other "experts" of any kind were going from one studio to the other to break the last resistances of the "irréductibles" from the two main parties as to insist on their neo-liberal dogmas to the unhappy Greek viewers.