



IV486 - July 2015

Past and present imperialisms: Putin, the War in Ukraine, and the Far Right

1 August 2015, by **Jean Batou**

In Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation is supported by important sectors of the extreme right such as Attack, in Bulgaria; the National Party, in Slovakia; Jobbik, in Hungary; the National Democratic Party, in Germany; the National Front, in France; the Freedom Party of Austria; the Northern League and the New Force, in Italy; the Flemish Interest Party, in Belgium; and so on. [1] On March 22, 2015, at the Holiday Inn in Saint Petersburg, the Russia Patriot Party organized an International Conservative Forum involving a large number of these movements, with participation from Eastern Ukraine military leaders linked to fascist groups. That network will strengthen the connection among European nationalists who support the Russian Federation's foreign policy against Brussels and Washington.

Which Russian Imperialism?

Some people nostalgic for the post-Stalinist Soviet Union close their eyes to this reality, forgetting that the denunciation of Russian imperialism was always at the heart of Lenin's thought and action. Did he not advocate the defeat of Russia in 1914? On December 12 of that year, Lenin

wrote,

The Great Russians cannot "defend the fatherland" except by desiring the defeat of Czarism in any war, this as the lesser evil for nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Great Russia. For Czarism not only oppresses those nine-tenths economically and politically, but also demoralizes, degrades, dishonors, and prostitutes them by teaching them to oppress other nations and to cover up this shame with hypocritical and quasi-patriotic phrases. [2]

Replace the word "Czarism" with "oligarchy" and Lenin's judgment remains completely true today.

Russia is a unique imperialist power because as it colonized the non-Russian people of its empire, at the same time it brutally repressed and virtually enslaved the mass of Russian and non-Russian peasants inside Russia, generally from the seventeenth century onward, a process that resembled those perpetrated by the European powers in their far-flung colonies. With the emergence of capitalist imperialism in the last third of the nineteenth century, Russia sought to compensate for the relative weakness of its economic and financial monopolies by the exclusive military control of a vast territory and, as Lenin suggested in

1916, by "special facilities for robbing minority nationalities." [3] In this way Russia could try to play in the big leagues, as a junior partner of France and England. Not understanding this, some Marxists refer to Lenin in order to call into doubt the imperialist nature of today's Russia, pointing out the relative weakness of its finance capital sector. But this only shows that they do not understand Lenin's characterization of Russian imperialism before 1917.

Great Russian Chauvinism and Soviet Russia

While finance capital's monopoly was shattered by the October Revolution, leading to the creation of the Soviet Union, Great Russian chauvinism and the privileges associated with it remained. That is why Lenin in his last writings proposed affirmative-action measures for the oppressed nations and gave cardinal importance to the struggle against social-nationalism, not hesitating to confront Stalin regarding his report on the Georgian Communists and accusing him of being a "vulgar Great Russian bully." [4] After Lenin's death, this battle would be lost and the theory of "socialism in one country" would mask

the triumph of Great Russian chauvinism over the rights of other nationalities. This largely explains how “atmospheric” violence (to take a word from Franz Fanon) of the Stalinist order of the years from 1930-1940 can be compared to that of the colonial world: massive expropriations, work camps, deportations and exterminations, forced Russification, and so on.

After World War II, the Soviet Union reigned again over its empire and its claims on an area that extended from China to Iran (Azerbaijan) to Turkey. [5] Beyond that, in July 1945 Stalin even proposed establishing a Soviet protectorate over Tripolitania (Libya) in North Africa. When Great Britain took a position in favor of the independence of Libya, Soviet diplomats took the fallback position of proposing a protectorate of the four great powers (United States, England, France, and Russia). Finally, when the Soviets perceived the possibility of a Communist Party victory in the 1946 election in Italy, they turned to the suggestion of an Italian protectorate, but unsuccessfully. [6] That little-known attempt of Moscow to revive for its own benefit the League of Nations’ mandates that had been established after World War I says a lot about its Great Power politics toward colonial people. Nevertheless, the Soviet Russian Empire’s hour of glory would last less than half a century and would be followed by an unprecedented collapse after 1991, with the loss of 14 non-Russian republics (some 5.3 million square kilometers of territory).

The Reunification of Great Russia?

Today the Russian Federation still has 21 non-Russian republics which comprise 30 percent of its territory. Reconstituted finance capital, the relative fragility of which is once again compensated for by the support of a powerful state apparatus, now becomes the first recipient of profits from the exploitation of the natural resources of Siberia and the Far East. Once again this is organized in a colonial fashion: Resources flow to the center, which returns a small part of

them to the various regions for their own development. At the same time, this system encourages Moscow to adopt an expansionist policy toward neighboring states, which ultra-nationalists present as an effort at “the reunification of Great Russia.” For Aleksandr Dugin, one of their current main ideologues and a follower of the “war between the continents,” the integrity of its former dominions can only be guaranteed if they agree not to leave the Russian orbit. He proclaims that “Every State [in] the post-Soviet space, if it decides to violently oppose Russia, cannot exist except in a truncated form.” (Liberation, April 27, 2014).

We have the same story from Igor Strelkov, a Russian military man who was engaged on the side of the separatists of Transnistria (an area between the River Dniester and the eastern Moldovan border with Ukraine), with the Serbs in Bosnia, and with the pro-Russian forces during the two wars in Chechnya, before leading combat units in the Eastern Ukraine. Then Strelkov became the Minister of Defense of the self-proclaimed Peoples’ Republic of Donetsk until mid-August, 2014, when he was removed from power by the Kremlin in obscure circumstances. “I believed that Moscow would quickly annex the Donbass region as it had Crimea after the referendum,” he told Der Spiegel. “Kiev is a Russian city. I want a new Russian domination, which is historically justified. The Ukraine has been and remains a part of Russia. My dream is that Russia re-establishes its natural borders as they were in 1939.” [7] One wonders if he means before or after the Hitler-Stalin Pact of that year.

With the rise of Great Russian ultra-nationalism, the racist and anti-Semitic ideologies in the tradition of the Black Hundreds that formed in reaction to the Revolution of 1905 have once again found fertile ground. The Islamophobic campaigns against the peoples of the Caucasus and of Central Asia, of course, occupy first place. In November 2013, Moscow’s Mayor Sergei Sobyanin (a right-wing nationalist) announced that the city would not be constructing any more mosques for the capital’s 1.5 to 2 million Muslim inhabitants. To that

one must add the right-wing propaganda against immigration of people of color, in particular Africans who have recently become the victims of a record number of aggressions. Jews, too, are once again in the sights of anti-Semitic groups operating openly through social networks and in the street.

When the Devil Gets Out of His Box

After Moscow’s military intervention on the side of the Ukrainian separatists, the call for a sacred union justified the increase in political repression. According to Olga Miryasova, the sociologist and militant Moscow civil rights advocate, the number of imprisoned activists rose from 1,500 in 2013 to 2,500 in 2014. A law against “inciting social hatred” allows the government to prosecute any criticism of police behavior.

Judicial harassment is particularly ferocious in Crimea, where any protest against the Russian annexation is systematically repressed. Such is the case of the student unionist, environmentalist, and anti-fascist Alexander Kolchenko, who was arrested in Simferopol last May 17 and transferred to Moscow, in spite of his Ukrainian nationality, together with other activists falsely and bizarrely accused of belonging to an extreme-right terrorist network.

It is in this context that Boris Nemtsov was assassinated near the Kremlin on February 27. A young physicist from Nizhny Novgorod and a neoliberal, he was elected to the Supreme Soviet in 1990, later appointed governor of the region, then an adviser to Boris Yeltsin in 1996 for his second term, along with Vladimir Putin, who became president in 1999. Since then the fate of these two young, neoliberal reformers (Putin age 47 and Nemtsov, 40) diverged. Nemtsov, out of power, criticized the corruption of the other in a series of publications with titles that left no doubt about his views: Putin and Gazprom, Putin and the Financial Crisis, Putin and Corruption, and so on. In 2009, when he was

running for mayor in the town of Sochi to denounce the business deals surrounding the preparation of the Olympic Games, he was physically assaulted.

Nemtsov was particularly hated by the ultra-nationalist milieus because of his Jewish background and his critique of the wars carried out against non-Russian peoples within the Federation. Recently, he announced the publication of his last report on the implications of Moscow's involvement in Ukraine, after having posted on Facebook an explosive article that the press had refused to publish. The post read in part:

Putin has declared a war of brother against brother in the Ukraine. This bloody folly by a crazed KGB man will cost Russia and Ukraine dearly: once again the deaths of young boys on both sides, bereft mothers and wives, children turned into orphans. An empty Crimea, which tourists will never visit. Billions, tens of billions of rubles taken from old people and children and thrown into the furnace of the war, and then after that even more money to prop up the thieving regime in Crimea. ... The ghouls need a war. He needs the blood of the people. [8]

Ukraine, the Oligarchs, and Fascism

In the Russian media, whose analyses are often complacently relayed by Western left groups of Stalinist origin or by those who place the question of national sovereignty of Russia (but not the nations it subordinates) above all, Putin and the separatists of southeastern Ukraine are today combatting a "fascist junta" and its policies that discriminate against the Russian-speaking population of the country's East. None of that, however, corresponds to reality, even if the Kiev authorities are dominated by conservative nationalist parties with ties to powerful capitalist monopolies.

In truth, in both the East and the West, Ukraine is ruled by several dozen oligarchs who have got their

hands on the essential economic resources of their region, who control the media, political power, and the police force, when they do not have their own powerful, private militias. In the East, these monopolies are particularly concentrated and exclusive, most notably those of Rinat Akhmetov, the veritable baron of Donbass. According to the Russian nationalist Sputnik & Pogrom website, Akhmetov recently persuaded the separatists and their Russian supporters to give up trying to occupy the neighboring port of Mariupol enabling him to continue to export to Italy—he couldn't do this from Odessa because that port is controlled by another oligarch—in exchange for providing emergency food assistance to the population of the Peoples Republic of Donetsk (RPD). The former RPD Prime Minister Alexander Borodai, a Moscow man, justified this deal in the name of the defense of a national revolution, or rather an "imperial revolution" in favor of Great Russia, which should not in any case be confused with a social revolution. [9]

While Akhmetov supports separatists to defend his own privileges, other oligarchs support the government of Kiev that emerged after the May 2014 elections. The president, Petro Poroshenko, took advantage of the privatization of the confectionery sector to make a fortune in chocolate (\$1.6 billion, according to Forbes). That said, the rule of the oligarchs is more fragile in the West, because they have smaller monopolies, they oppose each other, and they face a degree of popular mobilization and independent political expression. Moreover, the Kiev powers endorsed an elementary democratic demand—the integrity of the Ukrainian nation—against the age-old oppression of the Russian Empire, which was made manifest again by a wave of repression in annexed Crimea. Finally, if the far right is present in Ukraine, its popular support is significantly weaker than in Russia and in most European countries. If its activists have been very active on the barricades of Maiden, their political influence remains marginal. For example, Dmitry Yarosh, head of Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), which Moscow denounces as omnipresent in Ukraine,

received only 0.7 percent of the votes in the presidential elections of May 25, 2014.

The Western Imperialists and the Ukrainian Crisis

Of course, the Western powers, above all Germany, France, and England, but also the United States on a global scale, attempt to profit from the Ukrainian crisis. Historically, the twentieth century has demonstrated how the Ukraine, like Poland, is an area of confrontation between Russian and German imperialisms, the latter being at this time the dominant force in the European Union. The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, the predecessor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe or OSCE), has been an expression of Germany's Ostpolitik (eastern policy) project since the end of the 1960s, aimed at bringing about the reintegration of Eastern Europe, Ukraine, and Russia in the world capitalist economy through rapprochement rather than confrontation.

After the fall of the Soviet bloc and the Dayton Accord of December 1995 that brought about the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and brought it under the tutelage of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the CSCE gave birth to the OSCE. It aimed to promote representative democracy and market economies in the former Soviet bloc while at the same time attempting to prevent war. Its goal was to contain the social and political tensions caused by the implementation of brutal policies of liberalization and privatization. The time after the fall of the Soviet bloc was the OSCE's moment of triumph, during which it managed to quintuple its annual budget, raising it from 32.4 million in 1995-1997 to 155.8 million in 1998-2000, at a time when Russia was prostrate, its GDP falling by over 50 percent (!) from 1990 to 1999.

In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary,

and Poland became members of NATO; then in 2001, it was the turn of the Baltic states, as well as Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Between 2003 and 2005, all of these countries joined the European Union. For Russia, the prospect of European security based on the central role of the OSCE was illegitimate, while at the same time Russia gradually returned to the economic level of 1990 and finally surpassed it in 2005. At that point, Russia's ambitions for power seemed less and less compatible with the interests of the Western powers, so that in December 2004, at the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Sofia, Russia criticized the OSCE's "bias and double standards." The following year, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov stated the view of his country: "NATO deals with security matters and the EU economic affairs, while the OSCE is content to control the adoption of values ??of these organizations by countries remaining outside the EU and NATO." In 2007, in Munich, Putin again criticized the OSCE as "an instrument of a group of countries at the expense of another."

Anti-capitalists' support for resistance by people who are already under the tutelage of Russian imperialism, or are threatened by its expansionist conduct, should not lead those supporters to underestimate the aggressive expansion of Western economic interests in Eastern Europe. Such investments have indeed always needed political and military guarantees that the alliance with the major EU powers and the United States within NATO provides. In

Ukraine, foreign direct investment (FDI) is still very limited because of the instability of the country, but it already attests to the dominance of Western capital: from 2006 to 2010, Russian FDI accounted for only 10 percent of the total, against 12 percent each for Germany and the U.S., 8 percent for France, 6 percent each for Switzerland and Poland, and 4 percent each for Sweden, England, and Austria. [10]

Which Side Are We On?

Putin has certainly won the battle in the Ukraine, but probably not the war. The price for this has been the strengthening of Russia's most reactionary nationalist sectors. Last December, in the largest stadium in Grozny, in front of thousands of armed men, Razman Kadyrov, pro-Russian head of the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, presented his men as the president's special battalions: "We know that the country has an army, a navy, an air force, and nuclear warheads," he said, "but we also know that there are missions that can only be performed by volunteers." In mid-February, the Night Wolves, the Russian equivalent of the Hell's Angels, who are close to the Orthodox Church and to Putin, held a rally in Moscow under the slogan "There will be no Maidan in Russia." [11]

Those within the Western left who accept as legitimate Putin's claim that Russia supports the struggle of the peoples of the Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine against the "fascist

junta Kiev" (actually a conservative nationalist government) are, in fact, providing cover for the ongoing offensive of Russian imperialism on its western margins. This is all the more serious as they often adopt as well the bellicose and racist phraseology of Moscow. Consider the bravura of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the Left Party in France, who argued that the Russian Army is "the people in arms" and will not be intimidated by the bands of poor Chicano devils from the U.S. Army, and who "recommends that Putin keep" cool in dealing with "the collapse of the Ukrainian economy, the disintegration of this country" that finds it so hard to be unified. [12]

What a marvelous expression of solidarity of the "great French nation" with the "great Russian nation" against the "little Ukrainian nation," tinged with contempt toward the Mexicans of the United States who are oppressed by another imperialism which uses them as cannon fodder. Isn't it high time for the international left to break definitively with such a geopolitical and chauvinistic view of the world, often tinged with racism, that praises any form of opposition to the interests of American imperialism by any tyrant who comes along? Shouldn't the struggles and aspirations of the exploited classes and oppressed peoples of the world for their own emancipation, in the East as in the West, in the South and in the North, be supported unconditionally?

Translation by Dan La Botz.

New Politics

The European nightmare, Podemos and creative outbursts

31 July 2015, by Jaime Pastor

Therefore, our first duty at present is to organize solidarity with the Greek people, who are confronted by the

humiliation that Merkel and company intend to impose. This is essential if we want to impose a way out of the

situation that is anti-austerity and democratic, faced with the oligarchic despotism that, with its rejection the

call for a referendum, wants to install itself permanently in Europe.

In the case of the Spanish state, things are also very clear as regards: the recent "recommendations" of the International Monetary Fund (facilitation of lay-offs and "wage adjustments", increase in VAT, participation in the cost of health care and education ...); the cuts that have been announced by the government of Mariano Rajoy for future budgets (let us remember that public spending in this country continues to be 5 per cent below the average for the European Union); and the threats that Finance Minister Cristobal Montoro has already addressed to the new governments of the autonomous communities and municipalities following the elections of May 24, if they do not fulfill the conditions of the restrictive laws on "balanced budgets", in line with Article 135 [13] of the Constitution and with the Fiscal Compact of the eurozone.

Meanwhile, we still have a large number of empty houses and despite the "economic recovery" and statistical manipulation, the unemployment rate has hardly diminished, while precarious work and wage differentials among workers themselves have increased.

Added to all this, to highlight only some of the most severe measures, there are new attacks against civil liberties: such as the Public Security Act [14]; the reform of the Penal Code starting from July 1; and the likely approval by Parliament, starting on July 16, of the new agreement with the United States for the Morón base [15]. This has turned out to be a real "hidden gem" - in the words of a pro-governmental electronic journal - of the military deployment of the Pentagon, which is developing in a more and more aggressive way its "new" world geopolitics (especially in Africa), which implies greater internal insecurity. It is no coincidence that Rajoy, with the complicity of the PSOE, is conducting these discussions with the greatest possible discretion.

As always, the imperial "iron hand" accompanies the "velvet glove" of the new "commercial" treaties to dominate the world, such as the treaty

being negotiated between the United States and the European Union, known by its initials TTIP or TAFTA [16], which, fortunately, is beginning to emerge from the secrecy in which they wished to maintain it. It is beginning to be challenged in key countries such as Germany. It is a treaty which, if passed, would moreover confirm the blindness of turbo-face capitalism in the face of climate change, which has finally been denounced by Pope Francis and which was recalled in the second international ecosocialist conference that was recently held in Madrid.

So there are good reasons for us to be in the forefront of the growing disaffection with this "democracy" and with the European Union (EU), as recognized in the recent report of the Alternativas Foundation and also the European Social Survey. It is therefore not surprising that the events commemorating the 30th anniversary of entry into "Europe" have gone unnoticed. Because this "Europe", which did not even manage to unite to welcome the tens of thousands of people fleeing famine and war, has definitely gone from being the "dream" to becoming a permanent nightmare.

A plurality of actors

Therefore, the desire for popular unity cannot be separated from the horizon of a break from neoliberalism that gave birth to Podemos, and this obliges us not to limit ourselves to proposing government programmes which abandon this objective or which attempt to restrict criticisms of the "1978 régime", as appears from the statements of some of its leaders. Democracy against the debtocracy, protection of social rights and common goods, popular sovereignty and a constituent process (also, therefore, a process that is proper to Catalonia) on the road to another Europe and another civilizing project; these continue to be key ideas that are capable of uniting an indignant social majority, although, perhaps, the rhythms of the construction of a new hegemony are not as rapid as we would like.

In parallel with this option for a "change" that is not simply a "spare part" for the dominant bipartisanship [PSOE-PP] - and following on the historic change that we experienced in the municipal elections and, although in a more limited way, the regional ones - the idea that seems to be shared increasingly is that of an enlargement of the bloc of social and political sectors who want to "storm the institutions" in order to "win" and to lay the foundations of a new politics, in both its content and its forms.

This plurality of actors has been recognized by the leaders of Podemos, more on the political than the social level, in Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Isles and Galicia, but we are still far from that situation in other regions. Because it is certain that on the level of the state we cannot imagine other forces than Podemos as the main reference for the constitution of lists of candidates, but it is also true that there are many people who have not identified with this formation and who, at other levels - those of the community or the province - want to participate in the building of a campaign, both programmatically and in terms of electoral lists.

Added to this is the fact that Podemos is no longer the brand new formation it was in January 2014: it has already travelled a path marked by notable successes - as in the European elections [17] - but also by bitterness caused by the choice of a classic party model, centralized, with processes of bureaucratization and a fear of internal debates; a formation that is too centred on a leadership which, according to a widespread opinion, has lost the "freshness" of its beginnings and which is showing itself to be increasingly deaf to what is happening outside its offices and the circle of those who are closest to it. We cannot therefore be surprised at the significant decline in its participation in social networks over recent months, not to mention the number of local branches that have lost the enthusiasm with which they started out.

Creative outbursts

So it would be well to remember, along with Tomás R. Villasante, that "the leaders of the human networks are there because they know how to listen to all kinds of rumours, and when they lose the ability to be in contact with the people in the street they eventually become isolated and others appear in their place. This is why considerable powers are accorded to the "spies" or sociologists, informants or any type of daily information on the direction taken by the processes." [18] In this case, we could say that the leadership of Podemos runs the risk of living in a "schizophrenia" that resists recognizing that what was approved at Vistalegre, [19] though even then already questionable, is being applied; but we were then in a period different from what has existed since May 24, with the pressure for popular unity. The manifestos and articles that seek to sketch out another path are but a pale reflection of what seems to be happening at rank-and-file level, and not just among activists. Overcoming this tension between the old and the new phase does not necessitate making a "clean sweep" of the successes that have been obtained, but it really is necessary to reformulate the "winning" project.

To think that it is possible to respond to this new reality by simply looking for leaders in civil society, in social movements, in the judiciary or in... business [20], or even in parties like Izquierda Unida, in order to co-opt them onto a list headed by Pablo Iglesias, would be a mistake. It is clear that we need leaders that people can relate to and identify with, for the building of a collective will for change. But it is also clear that without political pluralism and without

candidacies that are rooted in their localities, it will not be possible to ensure that the battle for hegemony and a "new common sense" are reflected in self-organization and in social and popular power. Those are the only guarantees of transforming into victories what is won on the institutional level, as we are already seeing with the way the new municipal authorities are being harassed. To achieve all that, we will have to look for more open and participatory forms within Podemos, but also other forms that are turned towards the exterior without patriotism of the "brand" (or logo) and without arrogance.

Still, one of the key tests to know to what extent the leadership of Podemos has seen and has been capable or not of "reading" what took place in many towns and villages during the recent election campaign lies in what Diego Pacheco mentioned in a recent article [21]: the existence of an enriching pluralism inside and outside of Podemos will not be recognized with the system of primaries with "closed lists" (which has been employed up to now) and with moreover, apparently, a single constituency, according to what the Citizen Council proposed last Saturday, June 27 [22]. If this were indeed the case, we would be facing a huge obstacle to making Podemos the main driving force for change in the coming months.

Because with this "model", the leadership of Podemos will show not only the fear that it has of pluralism within its own ranks, but also an inability to converge with what exists outside of itself, in order to build a project of superior quality, in the best sense of the term, as happened in some towns and cities during the municipal elections. A project that goes beyond us in a creative way, generating this "enthusiasm" that is

produced at times of collective effervescence.

If this proposal was adopted, there would be still more of a contrast with what is being achieved in regions such as Catalonia, for example, (with the emergence of a possible Catalunya en Comú [23] and what could happen elsewhere.

Let us remember that the debate that preceded the emergence of Podemos revolved around the need for a "political-electoral tool" capable of getting past the institutional deadlock and making viable a project of a break with neoliberalism. The challenge now is to see whether Podemos passes the test and continues to be an adequate tool or whether, on the contrary, in the name of a "transversality", misunderstood and starting from above, its leadership becomes autonomous to the point where, as has already happened many times in history, it generates its own interests in a logic of electoral competition that could result in a "passive revolution", but not the "democratic revolution" which began on May 24.

To sum up, let us not be afraid of "creative outbursts," of ourselves being overtaken by better tools, which we can relate to and identify with, without giving up anyone's identity and, in this way, not adding to but multiplying the forces that are ready and willing to "win."

Finally, let us not forget our responsibility, even greater today, to join forces with the Greek people for the confrontation that has finally opened up with the dominant interests of the euro zone.

June 29, 2015

[Viento Sur](#)

Why we oppose all death penalties and the hanging of Yakub Memon

30 July 2015, by **Radical Socialist**

Two parallel events have again brought hanging back into the news. The first is the imminent hanging of Yakub Memon [24] Memon was a participant in the 1993 terror bombing in Mumbai. He was however a secondary figure, the leading figures being Dawood Ibrahim, Yakub's elder brother Mushtaq (Tiger) Memon, and others. A year and a half after the event, Yakub returned to India and was arrested by the police, in an incident which remains murky (Yakub said he wanted to surrender, police said he had been arrested).

Yakub played an important role in the Indian police proving that Pakistan had been concealing the truth. In other words, he played a kind of approver's role. An approver is of course one who was originally part of the criminals. But it is standard for approvers to get lesser punishments. But the Indian police and the political establishment wanted a Memon to hang. So he must be hanged, even though he has already spent 21 years in prison. This seems to be the principal reason for the rejection of his mercy petitions, and the death penalty in the first place, with all mitigating circumstances being ignored.

Very different is the other case. In 2002, after the Godhra train burning, there were planned pogroms all over Gujarat. One of the persons finally convicted for many of those crimes was Maya Kodnani. Kodnani was found guilty for the murder of 97 Muslims in Naroda Patiya, along with Babu Bajrangi and others. The Special Court that tried her gave her a 28 year prison term. The Gujarat Government refused to give the Special Investigation Team (SIT) the permission to seek the Death Penalty in a higher court.

This needs to be generalised and certain other facts understood. It is only when major issues, like the hanging or not hanging of Memon or Kodnani come up, that the death penalty is discussed. But according to Prashant Bhushan, who is a senior lawyer, certain basic data can be found in the patterns of people hanged - namely, a class bias. The figures from a recent study bear him out. Nearly 94 per cent of people in the Death Row in contemporary India, according to a recent study, are Dalits or minorities. Over 75 per cent are economically vulnerable. The most important reason this happens is, these people, poor, often poorly educated, usually do not even manage to get a decent lawyer at the trial stage.

The recent revelations about the hanging of Dhananjay Chatterjee reinforce this. He was an impoverished guard in a building where an 18-year-old named Hetal Parekh was found dead in March 1990. He was convicted of having raped and killed her and was hanged on his 39th birthday, August 14, 2004, protesting his innocence until the end.

An analysis by Debashish Sengupta and Prabal Chaudhury of the case showed that a police witness in court denied having seen Chatterjee at the victim's flat. The police seizure list was signed by someone who supplied tea to the police and did not turn up in court. The antecedents of some items presented as incriminating evidence, such as a necklace and a watch, were never checked.

The trial court failed to question why no murder weapon was recovered and why there was no blood on Chatterjee's clothes even though there

were 21 stab wounds on the victim's body. There are good possibilities that there might have been a so-called "honour killing" involved, since Parekh was supposedly raped and killed in a short window between 5:20 pm and 5:50 pm, (her mother had come back at 5:50), but the police were called only three hours later giving ample time to doctor evidence). The Parekh family members' evidences were inconsistent, and they soon ended their business in Kolkata and left.

The standard legal procedure is that guilt must be established beyond doubt. But in the cases where the accused are poor or from socially weaker strata, like Chatterjee, courts have often routinely ignored gaps and inconsistencies, simply because they did not have hotshot lawyers. By the time senior lawyers took up the case, they could only argue about procedural flaws, since the basic hearing had been in a trial court.

Yet, in 2004, when Chatterjee was hanged, his guilt was taken for granted, and those who campaigned that as he had already served 14 years in prison the penalty should at least be commuted to imprisonment were aggressively attacked.

His case, the cases of Memon versus that of Kodnani, all go to show that the death penalty in our society will only serve the economically and the politically powerful.

The mercy petition of Memon should therefore be supported, not because he is innocent, but because he does not deserve hanging.

26 July, 2015

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IV486 - July 2015 PDF

30 July 2015, by **robm**

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Democracy against financial colonialism

29 July 2015, by **Bloco de Esquerda**

1. In the European Summit of July 12, the the Greek democratic referendum was responded with the financial occupation of Greece. National humiliation, imposed against the will of the people, and three more years of social punishment, cannot end well. The European Union has shown to millions of citizens, that it is ready for anything to impose the austerity plan, even running over democracy. So, in Greece and all over Europe, the answer will be built against this Union.

2. These last months draw two essential conclusions. First, there is a great conservative-socialist coalition, led by the German government, that rules the European Union and imposes the dictatorship of the markets and the policy of austerity, unemployment, poverty and inequality. Secondly, this Union will not allow the existence of any government with an alternative policy and, facing a left wing government, will not hesitate to try to destroy it by all means.

3. While easily accepting the construction of a new and shameful wall by the far right government of Hungary, the European Union didn't hesitate to put the Monetary Union at risk in the move to crush Syriza's government. Proposing the hostile expulsion of Greece from the Eurozone, Schäuble broke the myth of Euro stability as the common currency of several states. Cutting off the cashflow to Greek banks for political

purposes, the ECB underlined the urgent need for mechanisms of national control on the banking system, independent from ECB.

4. Through 25 years, the European Union, defined by its treaties, has been an undemocratic device to institutionalize the neoliberal order: deregulation, concentration of capital, diminishing of social protection, pressure on salaries. The single currency was a crucial step in the consolidation of this project. Firstly, the removal of exchange risk is an essential condition for financial power and free circulation of capital. Secondly, the single currency defines austerity and labour devaluation as the exclusive mechanisms of economical adjustment: it ends national exchange and monetary policies, leaving them to a single institution - the ECB - exempted of democratic control and dominated by the German government and the major world financial institutions; it diminishes budgetary independence and blocks progressive industrial policies. The imposed goals are impossible to fulfill, but non-compliance legitimates European institutions to determine national budgets. Above all, this bureaucracy holds every meaningful decision and has proven immune to direct popular pressure or to the correlation of political and social forces within each country. Brutality against Greece is the proof of this immunity to democracy.

5. Our left has always been opposed to this European integration and the creation of a single currency. However, upon its completion, we admitted that it could be refounded under a better relation of forces and we never gave up fighting for it, both on national and European levels. A decade ago, the alter-globalization movement seemed to give credibility to that hypothesis. However, since then, the left focused on proposals for a European democratic refoundation and on correction mechanisms for existing macroeconomic unbalances: a European Senate with equality among states, reform of ECB rules, reinforcing Union budget, eurobonds. All these proposals were invalidated or abandoned by the social-democracy, that engaged in federalist authoritarianism, unable to stand up to financial interests, ending up as a fierce partner of Greece's punishment.

6. The austerity programmes imposed by Berlin and Brussels were based in a lie. The reason for the crisis would be the people living beyond their possibilities. This lie, repeated by the Portuguese rightwing government, was an attempt to obliterate the real origin of the crisis: financial speculation and the burst of the USA real estate bubble. The 2007-08 crisis, amplified by the Lehman Brothers crash, was followed by the bailout of the banking system and the socialization of its losses. Speculation then turned to the public debts of peripheral European countries. The

ECB financed commercial banks at 1% to buy sovereign bonds at much higher rates. This risk-free capital income turned public debts into the greatest global financial market. Through harsh austerity measures, labour income was directly transferred to debt payment.

7. In the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties and in the Fiscal Pact, in 2012, Europe had already constitutionalized austerity and the prohibition of policies for workers rights or welfare extension. With the election of the first anti-austerity government, the total logic of this European treaties was taken into practice. The German "great coalition" imposed its law on 18 countries and the German-French directorate was reduced to the figure of the Chancellor. The German government is today the all-mighty centre of political decision and budget control.

8. The Left must learn the recent history lessons to take clear positions. During the last six months of dispute, the Greek government made itself open to a viable agreement amongst equal states. In the outcome, it clashed with the extremism and vindictiveness of the "Euro-pean partners", turned creditors. The Left that commits to refuse austerity and the Fiscal Pact must be empowered and ready to restore sovereignty on essential options in order to respect national democracy.

9. The Left Bloc refuses any more sacrifices for the euro. To express this alternative is, more than ever, a battle for democracy; taking the Fiscal Pact to referendum and start the restructuring of public debt are essential steps in that path. With this clear mandate - that may result in a break up with the Monetary Union, as we underlined in the party's last

National Convention - the elected representatives of the Left Bloc fight for an alternative to European authoritarianism.

10. The internationalist left sets upon a new European alliance, inheritor of the struggles against fascism and militarism and of the social achievements of the post-war period. That democratic and cooperative project embodies the lessons of today's authoritarian attack and aims for new common goals in social, environmental, cultural and human rights standards. When xenophobic and nationalist parties rise as alternatives to the dysfunctional European Union, the resistance and insubmission movement can't wait. Recognising this fact and the huge difficulties, the Left Bloc reiterates its compromise with the widest possible alternative, gathering all the forces fighting for democracy, against austerity.

The complete subordination of a democratic country to the will and demands of other governments is not an agreement

29 July 2015, by **Zoe Konstantopoulou**

Admittedly the politically and personally painful moments which we have experienced in parliament during this term are multiplying.

In my capacity as Speaker of the House, I sent a letter to the President of the Republic, Mr. Prokypis Pavlopoulos and to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras [25], noting that it is my institutional responsibility to emphasize and underline that the conditions this bill is being introduced under allow no guarantees of compliance with the constitution, no protection of the democratic process or the exercise of legislative power of parliament, nor a conscientious vote by members of parliament [26].

Those conditions are blatant blackmail

by foreign governments of European Union member States on this government and on the members of parliament. The legal measures are introduced without any possibility of amendment by the parliament as was acknowledged by the Justice Minister, whom I honor and respect deeply, as he knows; their implementation would result in a major intervention in the functioning of justice and the exercise of the fundamental rights of the citizens, tearing down both the functioning of Greek democracy as a social state under the rule of law in which there is a separation of powers according to the Constitution, as well as the preservation of the principle of fair trial.

Ministers are being coerced into

introducing legal measures whose contents they do not agree with, but which they are directly opposed to, in this respect the statement by the Justice Minister was telling, and members of parliament are being coerced into voting them, while they too are opposed to their contents, and in this respect every statement by members of parliament in the two parliamentary groups which make up the parliamentary majority was also telling.

All this is happening under the direct threat of a disorderly default and reveal that, in truth, this bill which foreign governments and not the Greek government have chosen as a prerequisite, is an attempt at the completion of a dissolution, since this

bill contains a major intervention into the third independent function, which is justice. This bill attempts to undermine the functioning of justice and is lifting basic guarantees to a fair trial and basic and fundamental rights of citizens.

I consider it my institutional duty to react as Speaker of the House as well and to ask my counterparts in all the parliaments of the member States of the European Union, as I have done in the past and as I did in my letter to the President of the European Parliament [27], to react and to take a stand against this dissolution.

Likewise in my letter to the President and the Prime Minister, which I am going to enter in the minutes, I have asked them to formally inform their counterparts of the coercive and forceful conditions under which this vote has occurred.

Minister, I am addressing you in my capacity of the previous parliamentary term. I have addressed you before in this capacity, when I congratulated you for the bills you introduced and especially for your pioneering legislation on the prison system. I am addressing you from the capacity with which I was honored by the parliamentary group of SYRIZA and the current Prime Minister, then opposition leader Mr. Alexis Tsipras, the capacity of the head of the SYRIZA parliamentary group for transparency, justice and human rights and from this capacity I tell you that it is evident that no one in the parliamentary group of SYRIZA endorses the provisions of this bill because the parliamentary group of SYRIZA during the previous period as well, had expressly objected to and strongly opposed this same law, which ironically, is being introduced in an identical form, as it had been introduced by your predecessor Mr. Athanassiou, and is being accelerated in a shocking way by the creditors in order to put the nail in the coffin of one more expression of democracy.

Because just like they have attempted to turn the NO of the Greek people into a YES in both the communiqué of the Euro Summit as well as in the previous law introduced here again through emergency procedures last

Wednesday, so they are attempting to convert the 93.12% NO of lawyers as recorded in a nationwide referendum for the first time in early December 2014, into a YES.

These deprecating moves against democratic expression are entirely symbolic on the level of a referendum of lawyers and on the level of a nationwide referendum of citizens so that there is no doubt that the message which is being sent by the creditors is that democratic processes are futile, that direct democracy as expressed by citizens or professionals (lawyers, in this case), is irrelevant.

This is a poisonous message for European societies, it is a message that the left and SYRIZA must not allow to be either sent or circulated.

It is clear that what is being attempted is the obliteration of both the government and the parliamentary groups that support it, through blackmail. It is clear that what is being directly questioned is democracy in our country. What is asked of us, what is asked of me, Minister, by the creditors is, in reality, to issue, if I could, a seal that would say, "Greek Parliament" and hand it over to them in order to validate their diktats.

It is not acceptable that after SYRIZA and the committee for justice, rights and transparency struggled so fiercely against the undemocratic manipulation of the 800 pages in the article that was the measures of November 2012, the government be forced by blackmail and humiliation (that is the intention) to now introduce 977 pages, in two articles, one of which contains 1008 articles of the Civil Procedure code and the other 130 articles incorporating a European directive, many of which are 2 and 3 pages long. The government of the left cannot be forced to introduce such abbreviated and condensed, urgent articles, with suffocating deadlines, articles it has consistently denounced in the past.

Minister, I know that by addressing you I am knocking on an open door, because you have consistently fought against such regulations, you have consistently expressed and thoroughly analyzed all the reasons why this code

should have been withdrawn in 2014, and indeed was withdrawn, and that was a great victory not only for the lawyers who put up a struggle in defense of citizens but it was also a huge victory for the citizens' movements, for all those bodies which were mobilized and it certainly was a huge victory for the main opposition party of the previous period and the opposition as a whole.

This is the victory they want to turn into defeat and destruction in order to once again send the message that we must legislate through fear. Mr Juncker said it today, shamelessly: "fear," he said, "has led to the agreement"; and is it ever possible for this to be accepted and tolerated in a European Union, which has as its statutory principle the welfare of peoples and societies, the protection of rights and the shielding of democracy?

Minister, the NO of the lawyers on the 2nd and 3d December 2014 meant and still means NO to fast-track foreclosures, NO to auctions and forced expulsions, NO to mock trials on paper to prevent the hearing from proceeding, NO to the further degradation of justice, which is a pillar of democracy, it means NO to a further undermining of the constitutional rights of citizens.

When in the summer of 2014 Mr. Hardouvelis brazenly undertook the obligation to compensate for any consequences of judicial rulings which would annul memorandum provisions, the then opposition, the justice committee and the department of justice of SYRIZA were the first to step forward and say this could not be tolerated. Yet it is that very same bill that is being forced through with blackmail. So it would be good for my colleagues and comrades, whom I honor without exception, not to forget their own commitments and speak of an agreement. Coercion is not an agreement, blackmail is not an agreement, the aim to force the complete subordination of a democratic country to the will and demands of other governments and other countries, is not an agreement.

And we must not forget our commitments because at some point we might forget everything and we

might begin referring to the content of this bill as if it was our own. It is not our own, it is not the wish and the will of the government. This is also made evident, Minister, by the fact that you have set up a special committee to examine another draft code of Civil Procedure.

And it is not even the wish of members of parliament, who will vote in favor and belong to parliamentary groups supporting the government. It is not their wish to apply these inhumane measures, which leave citizens (borrowers especially) completely defenceless in front of the banks [28]. Minister, you know it, but perhaps citizens do not know this well, that the head of the committee that drafted this code was Mr Chamilothoris, who was responsible for the monstrous memorandum law 4055 of 2012, which has been collectively denounced not only by bodies but also by lawyers and representatives of the judiciary and which SYRIZA has pledged to repeal but also, that members of the drafting committee of this legislation which is now being accelerated are legal advisors of the banks. That is who the members of the legislative drafting committee that was formed by the memorandum governments are and there should be no doubt that the objective served is precisely, once

more, to hand over of the property of the citizens to the banks, that is the servicing of the banks and the bankers at the expense of citizens.

We must not open the door to allow this objective to be implemented, an objective promoted by the adoption today of this Code of Civil Procedure and here I would ask you specifically and my colleagues who are lawyers, to speak frankly; passing legislation is not a trivial thing, it is not a temporary thing and not a joke. This framework is becoming State law for the first time and indeed, in the form of a code. It is becoming State law that the Greek State is giving way to the banks and ranks after the banks in auction procedures. It is becoming State law that workers give way to the banks and rank after the banks at auctions. It is not enough to say that we vote now and will make sure they will not be applied. When we attempt to stop them from being applied, they will tell us, "but you voted for it"; moreover we know that we ourselves will not be in office permanently, whatever our present position.

This is a piece of legislation that goes into force on 01/01/2016. That proves both that there is no urgency and that it can be discussed under normal

conditions but also it raises major concerns in relation to the future aspirations and achievements of those who seek to overthrow this government and to humiliate the political forces that support it, and to prevent them (us) from standing tall in the minds of citizens and of society.

Colleagues, as a member of parliament for SYRIZA I could never vote for this bill; as one formerly in charge of the committee for the control of parliamentary work in issues of justice, transparency and human rights of the Parliamentary Group of SYRIZA, from which position I fought for three years to stop the memoranda attack on justice and civil rights but also the memoranda orgy of corruption and vested interests, I could never vote for this bill; as a lawyer, I could never vote for this bill and as Speaker of the House, I could never legalize procedures which will make Parliament merely decorative, which waive the guarantee function of Parliament, circumventing the conscience of parliamentarians and ultimately discarding democracy. Thank you.

CADTM

Translated by Zoe Mavroudi and CADTM.

The terrorist attack of Daech in Suruç - The AKP and the Turkish « deep state » are also guilty

28 July 2015, by Joseph Daher

These young revolutionaries had left Istanbul the day before the terrorist attack, to present themselves as "children of Gezi", children of the protest movement that began in Istanbul in June 2013. In a video of their campaign a socialist youth of the SGDF said: "We will plant five hundred trees in the name of revolutionaries who were killed in the resistance against the Islamic State in

Kobani. We will also plant fruit trees in the name of Berkin Elvan [who was killed during the Gezi protests at the age of fifteen], reconstruct the war museum in Kobani, rebuild the library and nursery at the cultural center, build a playground, and join the cleaning efforts in the city center of Kobani."

These young people were bringing

books, toys, clothes and young trees to plant them. The terrorist attack caused the death of more than 30 victims and hundreds of injured. Meanwhile, Daech also attacked the town of Kobani at the same moment.

These new barbaric crimes of Daech come in addition to the numerous crimes and massacres of the ultra fundamentalist movement in Iraq and

Syria and also across the Middle East region and North Africa in its totalitarian and reactionary project that target all the peoples of the region without exception. In Syria, Daech has particularly attacked and targeted Syrian revolutionaries in the zone they control.

This terrorist attack must nevertheless be understood as a consequence of the AKP government policies in collaboration with the Turkish "deep state" dominated by the Turkish military command since the beginning of the revolutionary processes in the region since late 2010 and early 2011.

These two reactionaries forces have steadily come to a rapprochement and collaboration in recent years despite significant opposition between the two actors when AKP reached power in 2002, as we have seen it during the Gezi protests in the summer of 2013. In addition to this, it should also be reminded the strengthening of the authoritarianism of the AKP's government in the past last years: multiplication of draconian laws and others giving more weight to security and police forces, violent repressions of popular movements such as during the Gezi protests in 2013, of demonstrations such as at the Gay Pride in Istanbul recently, or of the 1st of May, repression against labour strikes, use of sectarian rhetoric against Alevis, conservative and reactionary discourses against women, notably Erdogan stating that gender equality is against nature, not to mention the affairs of corruption, strengthening the hold of the Executive on the judiciary through a bill adopted in December 2014 and other manipulations of the judiciary, especially when four Turkish senior prosecutors who had instructed investigations of corruption against high AKP personalities in the winter of 2013 and 2014 were removed from office for disciplinary reasons, etc ...

As highlighted rightly by numerous Turkish progressive activists, it is also strange that the Turkish army that is so effective at turning away Syrian civilians fleeing the bombing of the Assad regime or attacks from Daech and attempting to illegally cross into Turkey, as it occurred last weekend when almost 500 Syrian civilians,

including children and women, were arrested by the Turkish security forces for trying to cross illegally into Turkey, but are unable to provide security to a gathering of 300 people in a cultural centre ...

Moreover buses of the young socialists were followed from Istanbul by plainclothes policemen. Also the governor of Urfa had ordered in June to stop journalists who asked him questions about the presence of members of Daech in his city.

The Turkish police in Istanbul also repressed the demonstrations in solidarity with the victims of Suruc on the same evening of the terrorist attack.

The AKP government has actually supported in Syria Islamists and jihadists actors against Syrian and Kurdish democratic forces of the revolution. This has particularly been observed when the leader of the army of Islam Zahran Alloush, located in the countryside of Damascus and guilty of numerous exactions against Syrian activists and notably the kidnapping of revolutionaries such as Razan Zaytouneh, was able to visit Istanbul without any problem to get to a conference of clerics, while many Syrian civilians are rejected at the Turkish borders...

The Turkish government has also gone blind at the passage of jihadists to Syria from Turkey, turning the latter into a transit zone for jihadists from around the world. Collaborations between the Turkish army and some Islamist and jihadi groups were also discovered.

In May 2015, former prosecutor of the Adana region, Bagriyanik Suleyman and his deputies Ozcan Sisman Aziz Takci and Ahmet Karaca were arrested by the Turkish authorities and appeared before the Adana court. Former Colonel Ozkan Cokay was also arrested because of his rank of highest army ranking in the region. The four prosecutors were transferred and suspended after having ordered the search of several trucks and buses in the provinces of Adana and Hatay, bordering Syria, in January 2014, because they suspected them of smuggling "arms and ammunition" to

Syria. A series of documents were then circulated on the Internet stating that the seized trucks were actually vehicles from the National Intelligence Agency (known as the MIT) delivering weapons to Islamist groups fighting the Assad regime.

In the autumn of 2014, when Daech was besieging during long months the town of Kobani causing the departure of about 200,000 people, the AKP government refused to help the Kurds or to allow the passing of PKK fighters across the border to fight the jihadists. During this period, tents to accommodate refugees were destroyed and a human chain for peace activists along the border was attacked with tear gas at the border with Kobani.

It was at that moment that the Turkish President Erdogan said that the PKK was worse than the terrorists of Daech... The Turkish authorities imposed at this same period a curfew for the first time since 1992 in six provinces in the predominantly Kurdish populated regions following large demonstrations by members of the Kurdish people against the AKP government's policy of not willing to help the city of Kobani and refusing the passage of the Kurdish fighters into Syria.

The main goal was and is to this day for the AKP government to prevent any form of autonomy of the Kurdish people in Syria, while supporting fundamentalist movements in Syria with ideological and political affinities and having connections with the central government in Istanbul and which are hostile to any form of autonomy of the Kurdish people.

These policies and the chauvinistic discourse of President Erdogan makes difficult any continuation of the peace process begun with the PKK in 2013 and is now completely blocked...

During the last legislative election campaign, the movement of the People's Democratic Party, known as the HDP, which achieved a historic score of 13.1% and obtained 80 deputies, was also the target of many aggressive intimidations by the AKP party and particularly of President Erdogan, not to mention physical

attacks by Turkish far right nationalist movements or of bomb attacks against election meetings of HDP. This party, which is in its majority composed and based in the Kurdish population, has managed to broaden its appeal beyond the only Kurdish population (20% of the population in Turkey) by a democratic and progressive political program that recognizes the Armenian Genocide, defends the rights of LGBTIQI people (with the first openly gay member of parliament) and defend the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, while over 40% of its elected deputies are women.

These policies have a historical basis

of discrimination and repression of the Turkish state against the Kurdish people, whose identity is still in many ways denied despite some advances, whether on the cultural, socio-economic and political level. It is in this context that the movement of the PKK and its members have been criminalized. There are more than 8,000 Kurdish political prisoners in Turkey. It is necessary to condemn in this framework the PKK's inclusion on the lists of terrorist organizations, such as the one of the EU, although political differences and criticisms can exist regarding the PKK. [29]

The AKP government and the Turkish "deep state" dominated by the military

have a responsibility in this barbaric massacre committed by Daech, which is why we also oppose these two actors, as any movement claiming a Kemalist heritage. These two reactionary forces have to be combatted in order to hope for a radical change in Turkey and to move towards greater democracy, social justice and equality for all popular classes in Turkey, for the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people in Turkey (as well as in Syria, Iraq and Iran) and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and other popular causes...

[Syria Freedom Forever](#)

Solidarity with striking FTII students

28 July 2015, by **Radical Socialist**

The FTII student's protest entered the 21st day against the appointment of Gajendra Chauhan and four other members to the governing council of the FTII. Students of the institute are on a strike since 15 June against the BJP government's interference in the institute of the country by nominating individuals that have no contribution to cinema or any art and are puppets of the Modi regime.

FTII stands among the many autonomous institutes and government bodies of the country that the Narendra Modi government has tampered with since coming to power. Since coming to power last year the Modi government has attempted to render the spheres of education and culture as puppets in the hand of the government.

Some of the educational institutions and cultural bodies where the Modi government has appointed party loyalists are the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), IIT Delhi, Children's Film Society of India (CFSI) and Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). The de-recognition of Ambedkar

Periyar Study Circle exposes the government's no tolerance policy to any form of dissent.

This is part of the larger design of BJP led NDA government to coerce autonomous institutions and bodies into fiefs of the Sangh Parivar. In the throes of this onslaught on democracy by the BJP and the Sangh Parivar, the continuing resistance of students of FTII is significant. Students of the institute have pointed out that they are against interference from any political party, let alone the communal right-wing BJP in the affairs of the institute.

FTII represents a democratic space where various class, religion and political views find expression. An example of thriving democracy was on anvil when the FTII students inviting Kabir Kala Manch, a cultural troupe to perform at the institute in August 2013 at a time when there was widespread apprehension of hosting them anywhere in Maharashtra. The FTII students braved the ire of the BJP student wing- ABVP's attack in the aftermath of the performance.

FTII is in the league of film schools

world-wide like the Prague or Moscow and enjoy's autonomy. In 1968 a FTII Society was formed with powers of appointing members to govern the institute. The right of appointment of members to the society was retained by the government. Though, successive governments have continued the practice of appointing members on the Film society, members have been chosen carefully so as not to tarnish the image of the institute worldwide. Several film personalities having contribution to cinema like Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shyam Benegal and Saeed Mirza have been the obvious choice of governments to the committee.

The Modi government's appointment of Chauhan and 4 other members is a departure of the practice of forming a governing council. Chauhan's only role to fame as Yudhisthir in the Hindu mythological T.V. saga Mahabharata, do not go in his favour as the choice for chairperson of the governing council. In a recent television conversation actor Anupam Kher showed up Chauhan for an ignoramus. Another name that has found itself to the governing council is Anagha

Ghaisas, whose only film is a propaganda piece on Narendra Modi named 'Shapath Modi'. Also, among the members appointed is a Maharashtra president of BJP's student's outfit ABVP who has been nominated under the category of eminent persons with contribution to art.

We believe that art bodies and institutes be managed by artists themselves. Interference of the government and any political party, in the matters is unwarranted. We support the students' call for a

committee to look into the student's demands and scrap the present council and form it afresh with credible persons having contribution to art and culture.

On 3 July the students met with the I&B officials, but the latter were not ready to concede the demands. Students' apprehensions that Chauhan name as the chairperson came from the Prime Minister's Office found some weight with bureaucrats fearing to reverse the decision of the appointment to the institute with the

fear of angering the Prime Minister. It is clear that the Modi government is bent on imposing a rightwing political agenda, and therefore urge all democratic forces to support the students and intensify the struggles. The striking students have already found immense support from artists and student activists across India and there is need for more people to participate in the intensifying theatre of protest.

11 July 2015

[Radical Socialist](#)

The Consequences of the Capitulation

27 July 2015, by **Éric Toussaint**

Alexis Tsipras replaced six ministers and vice-ministers (members of the Left platform within Syriza) who opposed the 13 July agreement by Syriza members who were favourable. Alexis Tsipras also sought and received the resignation of one of the spokesmen of the Syriza parliamentary group, Athanasios Petrakos, who also voted against the agreement and called, along with 54 other MPs (originally 49; [see here](#)), for a parliamentary plenary debate on the conclusions of the preliminary report of the Debt Truth Audit Commission, which had been presented to parliament on the 17 and 18 June 2015. It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to choose his fellow ministers, but it is not his prerogative to choose the spokesmen for the Syriza parliamentary group. The group itself chooses its spokesmen.

Helped by new loans from the European institutional creditors, in the framework of the 20 July agreement, Greece has re-established its repayments to the IMF and is preparing to repay the ECB.

Other unfavourable developments are probable.

Alexis Tsipras and the Syriza wing in

his favour seriously risk adopting policies that justify the unacceptable capitulation. Henceforth they are dependent on the support of New Democracy, To Potami (the new rightwing party favourable to the European institutions and austerity) and PASOK to have a parliamentary majority. This could change if Tsipras turned his back on his capitulation and called for a new vote in parliament to reject the agreement. We would like to believe this can happen but it seems frankly unlikely, even if the MPs who voted against the agreement continue to vote against laws that will cause longer and greater austerity. New Democracy, the principal conservative party (the same tendency as Merkel, Juncker and Rajoy), and the creditors will impose their will.

In May 2015, Alexis Tsipras promised the Syriza Central Committee that he would not sign any agreement without first informing them. He did not keep his word. During a Central Committee meeting held on 24 May 2015, 75 members had voted for more radical policies (suspending debt repayments, nationalising the banks, taxes on big fortunes, renewed labour rights ([see here](#) in French)). Ninety-five committee members voted against these policies. Alexis Tsipras did not call any Central

Committee meeting between 13 and 15 July. On the 15 July, about twelve hours before the parliament capitulated, 109 Central Committee members signed a letter expressing their opposition to the 13 July agreement. The party's two principal regions, Athens and Thessalonika, also said they opposed the agreement along with the Syriza national youth organisation. Later, more than ten other Syriza regions announced their opposition to the agreement. Nevertheless the promised meeting never took place. For a party in the grips of such dramatic choices such a meeting would be democratically essential.

When a political leader goes in this direction, the result can be mortal: democratic principles in the parliamentary group and in the party have been restrained in order to push the new framework through.

The change is radical and will cause many disastrous consequences. In the next ten days I shall give an explanation of how this happened, although I am not able, at this moment, to give a full analysis.

Among the causes of the disastrous outcome there is, of course, the stubbornness of the creditors; there is

also the strategy chosen by the Syriza leaders and by Alexis Tsipras and his government: the refusal by Tsipras to clearly and explicitly question the legitimacy and legality of the debt, the continued debt repayments, the failure to understand the importance of a popular audit of the debt (even though he officially supports the audit), the refusal to touch the interests of the big shareholders in the Greek banks that are responsible for the banking crisis and to take steps of self-defence in the face of the creditors' inflexibility and aggressiveness, the lack of contingency plans (which may have included the exit from the euro) and public explanations of the reasons for them, the illusion that negotiations could prevail on the creditors to make enough concessions to allow Greece to turn away from austerity, the refusal to start a constituent process in order to democratically change the Greek constitution, the failure to understand the role of popular mobilisations that should have been encouraged, and others. I will explain why the most urgent choice was not whether or not to remain in the Eurozone, but rather whether to negotiate without strength or to make a priority of taking the following five steps:

1. suspend debt repayments while continuing to audit the debt;
2. resolve the banking crisis, which means entering into conflict with the big shareholders who caused the crisis;
3. create a parallel currency;
4. increase humanitarian measures to add to those already taken since February 2015;
5. create new sources for the public treasuries by strong measures on the privileged, especially on the richest 1% and major tax evaders (see larger list of measures [here](#)).

In the new period we are now entering, the Greek government has become complicit in fundamental human-rights violations in contradiction with Greece's international engagements. Such rights as to a decent wage, a decent retirement benefit, decent jobs and working conditions, fully

comprehensive health and educational services, respect for democratic choices like the 'No' pronounced on the 5 July ([see here](#)). Of course the creditors (the fourteen Eurozone countries that advanced loans to Greece tied to unacceptable conditions under the auspices of the European Commission, the ECB and the IMF) are fully responsible for the violations that are committed, but as from now the Alexis Tsipras government will be in direct complicity with the creditors because he gave in to their stubbornness and will subject to their prior consent all important laws and measures that he intends to pass before the Greek government. There will be clashes between the Tsipras government and the creditors but the trap has sprung and I don't believe Tsipras will be prepared to make the about-turn that his conscience requires and a large part of Syriza are demanding. I hope I am wrong.

The 13 July agreement will increase the debt by more than €80 billion. This new debt will be just as illegitimate, illegal, odious and unsustainable as the previous ones because it is contracted under the same conditions of continuing policies that are in violation of human rights.

I would like to come back to the parliamentary session, which I attended, during which the 13 July agreement was adopted. At the beginning of the session the President of the parliament called for a time of debate sufficiently long to discuss the agreement in depth before voting. In accordance with an alliance between Syriza, the Greek Independents (ANEL), PASOK, New Democracy and To Potami the parliament rejected this proposition and accepted the creditors' dead-line to vote the agreement before midnight of 15 July. That meant about four hours to present the agreement, allow a small number of MPs to speak and then vote. For three hours the Prime Minister, and most of the Ministers and Vice-Ministers, were absent. PASOK, New Democracy and To Potami were delighted to take an active part in concluding the agreement. They all referred to the conditions of the agreement that were tougher than those in the agreement

put to referendum on 5 July and for which they called for a 'Yes' vote. They accused Syriza of falsely leading the people to believe that it was possible to get free from the straitjacket of austerity, thus minimising the disaster of their past administrations. The speaker for Golden Dawn denounced the agreement because it did not respect the democratic decision of the 5 July referendum, claiming that his party was the only one that was really resisting the creditors. The Communist party, that called for abstention in the referendum, denounced Syriza and the agreement and proposed to suspend debt repayments. Kamenos, President of the independent Greeks and Minister of Defence, declared that the 13 July agreement was a 'capitulation', the result of threats and a full-blown coup d'état. He added, 'Greece has capitulated but will not surrender (sic)' before calling on all the majority MPs to vote in favour of the agreement, thus putting pressure on the Syriza MPs who intended to vote 'No'. All the Syriza speakers were in favour of the agreement except Zoe Konstantopoulou. The Minister of the Economy, Stathakis, held that the agreement had three positive points: the debt could be restructured (in fact it is going to increase, as mentioned above); the reduction of the fiscal surplus imposed by the creditors; the banks will be saved. Otherwise, he recognised that the rest of the agreement had largely negative points. Remember that in 2013 he declared that only five per cent of Greece's debt was odious. It was also he who on the 12 July 2015 said that the Syriza MPs who had not supported the agreement should resign. Zoe Konstantopoulou said that the population had refused the 5 July agreement and that choice should be respected ([see her full speech in French translation](#):).

Alexis Tsipras, who entered the house at nearly midnight, explained that he had signed the 13 July agreement under threat. He recognised that the agreement was bad but nevertheless said there were three positive points: the debt would be restructured; the banks will be saved; the €35 billion promised under the Juncker plan would help Greece to improve its

economy in the next years. None of these three points can be taken seriously. The new President of New Democracy said they supported this agreement and that it was because of the irresponsibility of the Tsipras government that the creditors had hardened their demands.

Finally, the vote was taken. All the PASOK, New Democracy, To Potami and Independent Greeks voted favourably. All the MPs from the Communist Party and Golden Dawn voted against the agreement. The 149 Syriza MPs were split: 32 voted against (including several Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Zoe Konstantopoulou, the President of the Parliament and ex-Minister of Finance Yannis Varoufakis ([see his explanation \(French translation\)](#))). Seven abstained. Thus the agreement was adopted thanks to the pro-austerity right wing, the capitulation of Alexis Tsipras and a large favourable Syriza vote.

Over the following two days, Zoe Konstantopoulou and myself took part in two public conferences to present the preliminary results from the debt audit commission. The first conference, at the Faculty of Economics, was attended by an audience of 350. The second, at the Faculty of Law, was attended by 250. The entire audiences were unanimously against the agreement.

It is difficult to see what will be the size of the protests over the coming months. As was to be expected, the general strike called by the civil servants' union (which is very divided, having officials in all the Parliamentary political parties) for 15 July was not largely followed. On the

evening of the 15 July, as the Parliament was assembling, the left-wing protests in the streets were harshly suppressed (the first time since 25 January 2015). The police made dozens of arrests and about twenty protesters are to be brought before courts on 22 July. On 22 July the Greek government must decide on new laws that correspond to creditors' conditions. A new difficult situation will arise.

We have entered a new phase. Under these very difficult conditions it is necessary to reinforce solidarity with the Greek people.

Post scriptum: During the night of 22 to 23 July, the Greek Parliament adopted two bulky laws in a context that is bleakly reminiscent of the darkest days of the Troika (2010-2014).

The President of the Greek Parliament expressed outrage at the fact that MPs had received the 977 pages of these two laws less than 24 hours before and were not allowed to propose amendments (see Zoe Konstantinopoulou's letter to Alexis Tsipras and the President of the Republic [in French translation](#)). The text bears on a reform of the legal system that the creditors insist on and the previous government had already tried to introduce. In December 2014, lawyers all over the country had been invited to voice their opinion through a referendum organized by the General Assembly of Greek Bar leaders. Over 93% had voted against. Several magistrates had also opposed the reform. As noted by Zoe K, the fact that it is precisely this legal text that foreign governments chose as a

condition to start negotiations towards a third Memorandum of Understanding shows the extent of their contempt towards the principles on which a parliament, popular sovereignty and indeed democracy ought to operate.

The other measure that creditors thus impose on the Greek Parliament changes the law on private households' debts and on companies' bankruptcy in order to better protect the banks. In case of bankruptcy banks are the first creditors to be paid on the available assets whereas previously it used to be the wage-earners and retired workers of the company. As for mortgages, banks' privileges towards indebted households are reinforced so that they can more easily make use of foreclosures and sales.

31 SYRIZA MPs (including the President of the Parliament) voted against and five abstained. The laws were adopted with a majority of 230 "Yes" votes including those of the SYRIZA MPs who approved the measures and of the four right-wing parties (New Democracy, PASOK, ANEL (independent Greeks), and To Potami). The reason for the difference between the vote on 15 July and the vote on 22 July is that Yannis Varoufakis, the SYRIZA MP who courageously opposed the first part of the "agreement" on 15 July, voted "Yes" on the 22nd. Yet Varoufakis was not in favour of the two laws he eventually sanctioned. This clearly shows that part of the SYRIZA MPs who support the PM and his right-wing allies actually vote against their convictions.

Translated by CADTM

Communiqué of Syriza Youth on the agreement-memorandum and the future of Syriza

23 July 2015, by Syriza Youth

It would however be rather elliptical to interpret the outcome of the negotiations as solely determined by the choices of the creditors. We are obliged to evaluate negatively the underestimation of the relationship of forces within the euro zone, the unshakeable conviction that rational arguments could persuade the "institutions" to be in favour of a "mutually beneficial" agreement, but also that the threat of a Grexit that could play a catalyzing role for our proposal to prevail. All these points contributed decisively to the absence of an alternative plan of rupture that could have functioned both as part of the negotiations and as a choice for the government; all this was a decisive factor in our being politically kidnapped.

Parallel to this, the long indulgence in the technical aspect of the negotiations, waiting for an "honorable compromise" that was considered to be certain, left no space for the enthusiasm and dynamism that the participation of society would have created, against the dominance of the technocrats and the pursuit of a political exercise unperturbed by change. Furthermore, we refrained from "unilateral" actions that could have shifted the field of conflict towards the interior, consolidated our relationship with the people we represent, given the starting signal for new struggles, guaranteed the means to ensure the implementation of our programme.

In the face of this whole situation the insufficiency of the mechanism of the party (and of the youth organization) was decisive. The non-convening of

the Central Committee before the parliamentary vote on the pre-conditions for the agreement shifted the weight of decision-making towards incompetent organs, such as the parliamentary group, and towards the individual conscience of each of the elected members. The political undernourishment of the leading bodies of the party and the taking of decisions outside of collective procedures are two complementary aspects of the same relationship.

The agreement that was signed bears the mark of the overwhelming relationship of forces within the euro zone and of the blackmail perpetrated against the government and the Greek people. This political kidnapping and this impasse, for which we have paid the price, compels us to reconsider the axes and the orientations of this plan. We have the duty to consider that in the end, the EU and the euro zone operate as an institutionally moulded neoliberal system, limiting in the extreme the margins for their transformation. Our internationalist strategy must involve withdrawal from these formations, which is a demand for democracy and popular sovereignty, but also the prerequisite for challenging neoliberalism.

The adoption by parliamentary vote of the third memorandum runs counter to our ideological references and our collective decisions: it reverses the long march of Syriza and runs the risk of crushing hope in the only EU country where the Left has achieved a historic victory. For these reasons we situate ourselves in opposition to this agreement.

There is an imperative need, at this

stage, for the immediate convening of the Central Committee of Syriza and for the immediate calling of an extraordinary congress, the supreme decision-making body of the party, which would have overall responsibility for the balance sheet of the previous stage and for planning the strategy for the coming stage. Syriza also has a responsibility; it must protect all its members against personal attacks, which are foreign in their methodology to the principles and values of the Left.

It is in no way conceivable, in this context, to put aside the major importance of the referendum result. In this case, the government succeeded for a short time in making the people a protagonist, by choosing to give it the floor, against the extreme blackmail, the financial asphyxiation, the closed banks, the media frenzy. The referendum, as a social process and as a popular verdict, demonstrates that the struggle for the establishment of a social alliance capable of expanding democracy, synergies and solidarity in all areas of social life is more than ever relevant, but also that it bears within it a victorious dynamic.

As far as we are concerned, the struggle for a more just world is not a moral justification, but a way to change our daily existence, our lives, society. We will continue to follow this path, keeping constantly in mind that history is a field of the possible, in which we fight to make feasible everything that today seems unthinkable.

July 21, 2015

Revolutionary solidarity in the face of DAESH murders

22 July 2015, by **Sosyalist Demokrasi için Yeni Yol**

This Monday, July 20, 2015 a group of three hundred young people were moving across the border to participate in the reconstruction of the Kurdish town of Kobane, destroyed during the heroic resistance of the local population, the PYD and the militias of the YPG-YPJ, as well as volunteer combatants from many places.

In the framework of the campaign of support organized by the Federation of Associations of Young Socialists, with packages of toys, sanitary products, pots of paint, books and films, these young people, for the most part students, hoped to contribute to the reconstruction of buildings, to building parks and nurseries for the children, to setting up a library.

It is this feeling of unshakeable internationalist solidarity with the Kurds of Kobane which was the target for DAESH, and not "Turkey", as

claimed by Prime Minister Davutoglu. The jihadist organization is trying to export its war against the PYD, against which it was losing ground in Syria, to Turkish territory with this dastardly attack, as with the explosions at the meeting in the Democratic Party of the Peoples (HDP) in Diyarbakır.

But how can we not see here the consequences of the foreign policy of the AKP, resolved to bring down the regime in Damascus at any price, by offering temporary support to various jihadist groups in order to extend its hegemony in the Middle East? Let us remember the trucks packed with weapons and missiles prepared to go to Syria under the control of intelligence services, the hospitals available to wounded DAESH militants. Let us remember the barely concealed mirth of Erdogan when he stated that "Kobane is on the verge of falling". Was it not Davutoglu who proclaimed, when he was still Minister

of Foreign Affairs, that DAESH could be seen as a radical structure but that it was "previous discontent and indignation" which had caused this "reaction"? A month ago the press of the AKP announced on its front page, referencing military sources, that "the PYD is more dangerous than DAESH". And finally how can we forget the photograph showing the confident smile of this terrorist jihadist during his arrest by the Turkish police?

Faced with jihadist barbarism and its collaborators, we oppose the smiles full of audacity and hope which these young revolutionaries, dead on the road to Kobane, have bequeathed us. It is in continuing their struggle that we will embody the spirit of solidarity which drove them.

- For the right to self-determination of Kurdish people!
- Long live internationalist solidarity!
- DAESH Assassin, AKP Collaborator!

Srebrenica 20 years after: From commemorations to interpretations

21 July 2015, by **Catherine Samary**

On July 11-13, 1995, 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were separated from women and small children, and then murdered and thrown into mass graves. This reality is not challenged in Moscow or Belgrade whose leaders will be present at the commemorations. These crimes were condemned by the Serbian parliament and, according to a recent poll by 54% of persons interviewed in Serbia - although 70% reject, like their leaders, the characterization as genocide. Such a refusal is without doubt still more radical within the Republika Srpska - the Bosnian Serb

entity where the massacre itself occurred: here, it is still likely that the political leader Radovan Karadzic as well as the commander of the Bosnian Serb armed forces General Ratko Mladic, who are waiting in the Hague for the verdict of their trial for genocide, are still perceived as "heroes".

We are therefore on this 11 July 2015, very far from a common "truth" and a clear denunciation of responsibilities. But what responsibilities? Contrary to what the dominant commentaries say, it is not the term of genocide which is the real test of "the facts", without

omission and on a scale allowing their full interpretation. The tree of the "word" (genocide) risks hiding a dark forest with two components - that of the dismemberment of the former Yugoslavia on "ethnic" bases, and that of international realpolitik as the background to the signing of the Dayton agreement, a few weeks after the massacre in Srebrenica. It is to establish the obvious *links* between this massacre and *the set of "conditions"* that allowed US diplomacy to have signed, a few weeks later, the Dayton accords proclaiming "one" Bosnia-Herzegovina, deeply

traumatized and divided, "sovereign" and under a de facto international protectorate. [30] Strangely, the *Guardian* does not include Franjo Tudjman among the major actors of Dayton and forgets to mention the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Serbs from the Krajina, as one of the pre-conditions of Dayton].

What "truth"?

The United Kingdom, by presenting to the United Nations a resolution strongly supported by the United States (masterminds of the Dayton agreements) claims, by adopting the term used by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to characterize the massacre of Srebrenica, to implement the truth. But it is far from being demonstrated that the ICTY - dependent on the funding and political pressures of the major powers, which have put it in place in an ad hoc manner - has been able itself to exercise any authority of "truth" on the international responsibilities of such a tragedy; it has also not allowed any analysis of how it fits into the wars of "ethnic cleansing" which ravaged Bosnia for three years, with about 100,000 deaths (70% Muslims, who are only 43% of the total population) and several hundred thousand refugees and internally displaced persons.

US diplomacy exploited the failures of the "peace plans" as originally conceived by the European governments and the United Nations - the plans failing successively in the face of the advanced practice, on the ground, of ethnic cleansing: two states in the Bosnian state tended thus to forge themselves by actions of terrorizing the "undesirable" population, on the one hand "Republika Srpska" (Serb dominated) and parallel to this (which is generally not said) Herzeg-Bosna (around Mostar, Croat dominated). The ultra-nationalist militias of these two sides met from 1991 and encircled Sarajevo, advancing their parallel projects on the backs of the populations most attached to a multi-communitarian Bosnia Herzegovina, the Muslims in particular (known as

Bosniaks since the 1990s).

One of the constants of the failures of UN and European policies was that they were designing pseudo "peace plans" in the context of wars: the negotiations only confirmed the progress of the territories controlled by the Serb and Croat nationalist militias; but none of the European powers engaged in these plans, any more than the United States which remained on the margin until 1994-5, were ready to interpose themselves against ethnic cleansing, or lose a single man. The UN forces were supposed to guarantee a "peace" which did not exist in the plans. But in the security zones they should theoretically protect the people. If they did not do so at Srebrenica it was because they did not have (any more) the mandate to do so.

When Richard Holbrooke took up the "dossier", a spectacular turn was made by NATO, exploiting the impasses of the United Nations and the EU, the United States seizing on the Bosnian conflict to maintain NATO and then redeploy it - after 1991, despite the end of the cold war. In practice, a few NATO "targeted strikes" by NATO on a United Nations mandate, against the Serb-Bosnian forces, accompanied the delivery of US weapons to the Croatian army: this allowed Washington, without engaging American ground troops, to balance the relationship of forces on the ground. But this overall arrangement also camouflaged a pragmatic turn: Slobodan Milosevic, previously denounced by the US as a "Serbo-Communist" and the "Butcher of the Balkans", was linked to the negotiations at Dayton, as he had been in 1993 with the European and UN peace plans in Croatia and then in Bosnia. Holbrooke was seeking a "stabilization" of the whole region by balancing power relationships and compromise without clear defeat - "principles" and human victims counted for little in these calculations.

Behind the Dayton agreements lay therefore a first pre-condition: the "map" of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina according to the constitution drafted by the United States, should be perceived as beneficial by each of the signatories,

therefore "acceptable" without continuation of the war, from the point of view of the protagonists. After three years of ethnic cleansing under the direction of the Bosnian Serb nationalist forces, the Serbian "entity" (the so-called "Republika Srpska") was going to be endorsed in Dayton on 49% of Bosnia-Herzegovina - but so that the weapons would fall silent, the Bosnian Serb forces had to be left to suppress the "ungovernable" enclave of Srebrenica. The remaining 51% would be attributed to the "Muslim-Croat federation", the second "entity" created by the Dayton accords. It went, under US pressure, to contain the separatism of Herceg-Bosna where the Croat nationalist militias had notably destroyed the Muslim areas of Mostar, through a fragile and forced "anti-Serb" alliance within this "federation".

In other words, at Dayton, the most "separatist" Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat militias and nationalist leaders were excluded in order to maintain the fiction of a unified state; but it was necessary to make the people accept as "representative" of their interests respectively Slobodan Milosevic (leader of Serbia), Franjo Tudjman (head of the Croatian state), and Alija Izetbegovic in Sarajevo. The three signed the Dayton agreements for reasons which were of course opposed: Izetbegovic accepted because they maintained a supposed sovereign and indivisible Herzegovina of which he could officially be president; while the leaders in Belgrade and Zagreb understood, as they had from the beginning of the 1990s, that it amounted to an ethnic division of Bosnia, defended in a radical way on the ground by the Bosnian Serb and Croat nationalist forces.

Henceforth the accords included a constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, allowing Belgrade and Zagreb strong ties with the "entities" defined on an ethnic basis. Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat forces accordingly agreed to be represented by the leaders of the neighbouring states, because they had gone as far as possible through force of arms, and their "advances" were in large part recognized by the new constitution of Dayton. The hope of

separatist forces was also that time would leave the door open to a subsequent break-up of Bosnia. As for Milošević and Tuđman, their “moderation” - by comparison to the ultra-nationalists - earned them international recognition (with the key mitigation of sanctions against Belgrade) and especially, they became masters at home to manage the fate of their respective “minority”: the silence on the conflicts in Kosovo at Dayton went hand in hand with another silence, concerning the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Serbs from

the Krajina region of Croatia, without the shadow of Srebrenica and accompanied by the silence of diplomats and the international media.

In other words, we cannot understand Srebrenica or isolate it from the general meaning of the wars of ethnic cleansing which ravaged Bosnia, or by ignoring the impact of the real-politik of Dayton on the maps drawn by ethnic cleansing. At the same time, it is necessary to measure the particular violence that the Muslim populations experienced: the aggression inflicted from both sides at the same time and the particular fragility of the Bosnian

“Muslim nation” had a basis, including the sense of international collusion which was able to galvanize the aggressors

However, this has not prevented (on the contrary, without doubt) this population from being the most heavily committed to a state which affirmed both a universal citizenship (independent of cultures, languages, religions) whether Yugoslav or Bosniak, and the diversity of histories forging developing and often intermingled “national” identities. It deserves homage for this also.

The ECB destabilized the Greek economy to subject Greece to creditors' demands

19 July 2015, by **Éric Toussaint**

Has Athens really been subjected to a financial coup d'état over recent weeks as claimed by many Greek and foreign observers?

Éric Toussaint: Yes and no. What was decisive was the result of political decisions made by political institutions, though obviously complicit with financial interests. The coup d'état was not directly led by financial powers, but by institutions, the European Commission and the heads of State and Government of the Eurozone. Germany was not the only country involved. Mariano Rajoy in Spain, or Pedro Passos Coelho in Portugal, not to mention the Finnish, Latvian and other decidedly neoliberal governments clearly wanted to demonstrate to their respective populations that the options presented to the European peoples by the Syriza government were unworkable. So the primary motivation was political. Clearly though the private banking sector and the multinational corporations also wanted to show that it is impossible to turn away from austerity policies. However, it must be remembered that Greece's principal creditors are public institutions; since

2012 when they managed to unload their Greek debt, private banks are not the most interested party. The debt restructuring that took place permitted them to comfortably withdraw. Today, despite the failure of the economic policies that have been imposed on Greece, the European Commission, the ECB and the Eurozone countries are adamant that Greece continues on the path of neoliberalism. Remember that the IMF is also a political institution.

Alexis Tsipras expected assurances for debt relief in return for his capitulation to the austerity policies. The creditors have merely acquiesced to a discussion scheduled for this year on a possible debt restructuring starting from 2022. Why this obstinacy, while the IMF itself now considers the debt as unsustainable?

Éric Toussaint: I think that a Debt Restructuring is feasible before 2022. The creditors will say “not before 2022” because they know that this plan will not work and that the debt payment will be unsustainable. They

will restructure this debt provided the neoliberal reforms are pursued. Debt is a means of blackmail, an instrument of domination. Basically, in the Greek case, the creditors are not so much motivated by profit, pertinent as it is, as by teaching a lesson to their own people and the peoples of other peripheral countries that there is no question of deviating from the model. For Hollande to say, “Look, even Tsipras and the radical left cannot escape the economic stranglehold!” is a way of vindicating his own abdication in 2012 on the promise to renegotiate the European treaty on fiscal stability.

Did Tsipras have any other choice vis-à-vis the violent attacks from the creditors? Does the alternative boil down to an exit from the Euro?

Éric Toussaint: I don't think so. The choice was not necessarily between Grexit and remaining in the Euro Zone equipped with a new austerity plan and continuing to pay the debt. It was possible to stay in the Euro Zone by disobeying the creditors through legal means. Human rights violations are at

stake here. The Greek authorities should have suspended the debt payment; retrieved control over the Bank of Greece (Antonis Samaras appointed its CEO, who has not served the interests of the country); and created a complementary electronic currency that could have helped to cope with the liquidity crisis, whilst remaining within the Euro Zone.

The State should also have taken the following steps:

1. Organize an orderly liquidation of banks and transfer the assets to the public sector (guaranteeing deposits up to €100,000) whilst ensuring the protection of small shareholders and recovering the cost of cleansing the banks from the wealth of major international shareholders.
2. Reduce VAT on goods and basic

utility services; reduce direct taxes on low income and assets; and levy heavy taxes on the income and wealth of the richest 10% (particularly the richest 1%).

3. Stop privatization and reinforce public services.

After the Greek Parliament adopted the disastrous agreement of 13 July, the prospect of a voluntary exit from the Euro is obvious. That there is no favourable solution for the peoples within the Euro Zone is now evident to more and more Greek and other European people. In case of a voluntary exit from the Euro Zone, the above propositions remain fully valid and a redistributive monetary reform must accompany them [see Greece: Alternatives to the Capitulation](#)

The ECB, one of the masterminds

of the coup, is flooding the financial markets with liquidity and boosting speculation. Can capital generation serve the real economy, social needs and human development?

Eric Toussaint: Of course but this not what the ECB has been doing! Mario Draghi is not "independent". He is the interface between major private banks and the governments of the Euro Zone. The ECB has deliberately destabilized the Greek economy to suit its own as well as other creditors' purpose.

Translation : Suchandra de Sarkar, Mike Krolkowski and Christine Pagnouille

[L'Humanite](#)

Same-Sex Marriage: An Ambiguous Victory

19 July 2015, by **Peter Drucker**

Little did I know. With the US Supreme Court's ruling on June 26 establishing a nationwide right to same-sex marriage, tens of millions of people in the 28 states without laws against discrimination based on sexual orientation are now free to marry someone of the same sex – and be fired or thrown out of their homes if their bosses or landlords find out and disapprove. The stage is set for countless repetitions of the plot of the 2014 film *Love Is Strange*, where two gay men who get married after decades together end up broke and homeless as a result – though that story is set in New York City, where both city and state anti-discrimination laws make an exception (as is usual) for "faith-based" employers like Catholic schools.

How did we end up in this peculiar situation? The fight for partnership rights originally gathered steam as a reaction against glaring injustices. Especially during the height of the AIDS epidemic, the trauma of a partner's sickness and death was

compounded for thousands of gay men by having their hospital visits barred and being thrown out of apartments that were in their dead partners' names. We can only rejoice at the spread of protections that have safeguarded health insurance, housing rights, immigration rights, tax equality and more for people in same-sex relationships. In this sense, the Supreme Court's ruling is the culmination of a positive trend.

But at the same time, the lesbian/gay movement's increasing focus on marriage has reflected a negative trend. From the 1970s to the 1990s, the leadership of US LGBT movements was largely in the hands of the left. Its high points were the national marches in 1979, 1987 and 1994, which were organized through a painstakingly inclusive, democratic process and championed a broad range of progressive demands. The balance of LGBT forces shifted dramatically with the Millennium March on Washington in 2000, organized from the top down by the right-leaning Human Rights

Campaign and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (a gay-founded Protestant denomination). Although the National Equality March in 2009 was more broad-based, the movement has never fully returned to the left-leaning agenda of the previous century.

The emphasis on marriage has been an ambiguous legacy of the movement's political shift. Wherever in today's world same-sex marriage is won, it is a victory for equality – and at the same time a contribution to growing inequality. It is a victory for equality, because it allows millions of same-sex partners to enjoy basic rights that cross-sex spouses take for granted, like not being thrown out of your home when your partner dies. It is a contribution to growing inequality, because it allows the state to pursue the neoliberal agenda of transferring its social responsibilities for people in need to their families. In return for the rights they are granted, same-sex couples pledge to form stable,

difficult-to-dissolve households that bear the burden of supporting their members when they are unemployed, disabled or sick. And in fact, initial studies have shown that same-sex marriage helps increase inequality in LGBT communities. Well-off lesbians and gay men gain from it, notably from lower inheritance taxes. Low-income LGBT people often lose out on average, particularly where poor people's social benefits are slashed when they have an earning spouse.

This helps explain a paradox of sexual politics: marriage equality has been making rapid, relatively easy gains, while abortion rights remains a hard-fought battle. As Katha Pollitt has pointed out, "Marriage equality has cross-class appeal [whereas it's] low-income women who suffer the most from abortion restrictions - and since

when have their issues been at the top of the middle and upper classes' to-do list?" Furthermore, "Marriage equality costs society nothing [but] reproductive rights come with a price tag."

For at least a decade now, there has been a steady drumbeat of criticism of the one-sided focus on marriage from progressive LGBT veteran activists and intellectuals. A high point was the 2006 statement "Beyond Marriage," which urged "alternative forms of household recognition beyond one-size-fits-all marriage," access "for all, regardless of marital or citizenship status, to vital government support programs," an end to all "state regulation of our sexual lives," a push for a "caring civil society" instead of privatization of social services, and

LGBT movement strategies that speak to the "widespread hunger for authentic and just community."

As long as marriage equality offered a simple approach and a prospect of fast, easy victories, support for progressive alternatives has been limited. Now, however, more and more same-sex couples will be experiencing joys of marriage that have previously been a monopoly of cross-sex couples, from tensions over sexual exclusiveness and the division of housework to custody and alimony fights. Especially if the broader left gains more support in response to economic crisis, wars and racist violence, a big audience may yet be won for a radical vision of domestic equality.

[New Politics](#)

The Greek test of strength and the urgency of a strategic debate on the left

18 July 2015, by **LCR-SAP**

1. The Greek experiment - the victory of an anti-austerity party as an alternative to social democracy which has led six months later to a new and even harsher austerity cure - obliges all the left forces and the labour movement to realise the enormous obstacle that not only the euro but also the European Union constitutes. The EU is not a force for peace, progress and democracy: it is a despotic set of institutions and rules entirely in the service of the capitalist project of the major industrial and financial groups. These want to make clean slate of the social and democratic conquests to face inter-capitalist competition in the world arena.

2. If this third memorandum passes, the defeat suffered by the exploited and oppressed of Greece will be initially the result of the cowardice of the traditional leaderships of the labour movement and the left (both

political and trade-union) in the rest of Europe their inaction and even shameful complicity with the troika. This is the fruit of decades of collaboration with the "European project" on the part of social democracy, the Christian Democrats and the European Trade Union Confederation. But this defeat would be also the product of the governmental strategy of Syriza's leadership, based on the fatal illusion of a possible compromise within the framework of the European Union and the Euro. Indeed, it is this illusion that has led Tsipras to sacrifice the will of the Greek people, expressed clearly in the referendum (that Tsipras had called himself!), on altar of "respect" for these institutions and the "sense of responsibility" concerning their "stability".

3. The cruelty of the austerity once again imposed on the Greek people is a measure of the fear of the European

ruling classes: fear of the victory of Syriza and the decomposition of Greek social democracy, and consequently the absence of a political solution of replacement for the middle-class; fear of the risk of contagion in Europe, initially in Spain with Podemos; fear, especially, of the fantastic popular mobilization which led to the victory of "Not" with the referendum, and which was likely to give to this contagion an uncontrollable dynamic.

4. The proof has been given that a social, democratic and ecological policy is not realizable without overturning the EU. The alternative is not a retreat to nation states - a path that could have no other result than a return to war between European powers - but a long-term combat aiming at paralysing then to break the EU in order to make possible the creation by the people of a completely different structure: the socialist United States of Europe.

5. To move forward in the direction of another Europe (thus of a constituent assembly of the European peoples) implies immediately coordinating the fights against austerity. This coordination confronts the difficulty not only of the policy of the traditional organizations, but also the great differences of rhythms and situations between the countries and the division between countries - that the European Union sharpens and that the single currency deepens by stimulating the international division of labour and the unequal development within Europe itself. The action of a left government in a country must thus seek to support internationalist solidarity and the popular mobilizations on the basis of rejection of austerity and despotism, and thus aim at creating the conditions of struggles which extend a greater number of countries, which converge, coordinate and make the EU and the euro increasingly ungovernable.

6. Leaving the Euro is not a sufficient condition to break with austerity (as the case of Britain proves) but, in the Greek case, for the countries of the periphery and those which are not in the heart of the euro zone, it is clearly a requirement.

7. The need to break with the euro does not imply making leaving the euro the central axis of an alternative programme. Even in Greece, where the question arises in a burning and immediate way, the axis of the alternative programme must be the rejection of any austerity and the implementation of social, ecological, anticapitalist and democratic policies, which directly improve the fate of workers, young people, women, the victims of racism, and the peasants.

8. To make leaving the euro the axis of the alternative would be to run up unnecessarily against the very generally-held idea that the currency is only "neutral" technical means of allowing trade, whereas it is in fact also the crystallization of a social relationship. To make leaving the euro (or the EU) the axis of the battle would be also to play the game of the hard-line and far right, by spreading the illusion that a harmonious socio-economic-ecological development would be possible within the national

framework. This illusion harms internationalist solidarity. However, this is crucial not only for the fight in Greece, but also because the integration of the economies on the continent requires a European anticapitalist perspective to satisfy social needs and to answer the urgent ecological needs.

9. In the current conjuncture, outside a (pre) revolutionary period, the completely intransigent rejection of austerity, the intransigent requirement of democratic policies and respect for popular sovereignty, concrete measures of self-defence against internal and external capitalist sabotage - such as the socialization of the banks, capital controls, a land register and inheritance taxes, suspending the payment of the debt and its cancellation, workers' control in the companies - are an indispensable condition for achieving this goal.

10. The key of the situation does not lie in the development of a "plan B", a catalogue of more or less technical measurements - which implies by definition a "plan A" of staying in the Euro. It resides in a social strategy centred on the winning of ideological hegemony by a block bringing together the exploited and oppressed (workers, including notably women, youth, small farmers, illegal immigrants and the racialized) in the perspective of mass confrontation with capitalist logic and the European institutions which incarnate it.

11. A strategy which states clearly and without flinching that it will go forward until the moment of rupture, without worrying about the institutional crisis it will provoke in the EU, without worrying about the loss of credibility which results for the alleged "the European project" or "the stability of the euro", makes it possible to move from the defensive to the offensive because it encourages the mass mobilization of the exploited and oppressed. The week of mobilization for NO in the referendum, in Greece, showed the enormous social energy that can be released in this way, and how it can attract women, youth and workers in Europe and in the world.

12. The enemy is not "Germany" but capitalism and its institutions, the first of which is the European Union. The euro is not the currency that Germany imposes on Europe but the currency that European capital needs to reduce its transaction expenses, to strengthen finance and to have a broad market for its multinationals. Neo-liberalism is not a German dogma produced by the Lutheran ideology or the Nazi past of Germany but the only really existing form of international capitalism battling against its double social and ecological dead end. German domination of the European Union is not a national domination but a domination of capital, of which German workers are also victims. Leave aside demagogic remarks which divert our attention from our real adversary. The alternative is not a "democrats front" against Germany, it is a front of the exploited and oppressed against capital and its institutions. Belgian employers, Belgian banks and the Belgian government, like its predecessors with "socialist" participation, actively supported the social war against the Greek popular classes which profited them.

13. The strategy that we propose requires a recomposition of the labour movement and the left, on both the political and the trade-union level. The two dimensions are inseparable. On the one hand, given mass unemployment, the European institutional obstacle and the total and irreversible transformation of social democracy into social-liberalism, the building of new parties on the left of social democracy and the Greens is more than ever essential. In addition, the increased sharpness of the fight to be carried out requires an in-depth social mobilization, therefore the construction of democratically organized social movements, with active implication of working people and youth in the workplaces and in the local areas. Within this framework, winning back the trade unions by their members occupies a strategic place, as does the fight against the false ideas that confuse "trade-union independence" and "apolitical attitude".

14. The fight continues, in a partly new context. At the time of writing,

the result is uncertain. If the troika gains this battle, it will be at the cost of a major discredit of the EU in general and its German motor in particular, without solving the Greek crisis in the medium and long term, in particular the debt crisis, and by weakening the euro. In Greece, a new political recomposition of the left of the left is on the agenda to offer an alternative to the attempt at "national unity" in Parliament around "yes" to

the diktat. More than ever, it is a question of developing solidarity acting alongside the workers and the youth of Greece. Everywhere, it is a question of renewing radicalizing the fight against austerity and for a political expression of this combat, learning the lessons from Greece.

15. Let us draw them in particular in Belgium, because the parallel is obvious between the strategy of

Tsipras ("a referendum to better negotiate") and that of the trade-union leaderships at home ("an action plan to open a dialogue"). The Greek defeat should show us where this "responsible" strategy will lead us if we do not force our organizations to change course.

Brussels

15 July 2015

Triumph for "Barcelona en Com  "

17 July 2015, by **Mart   Caussa**

But it was necessary to meet two conditions:

    To have a project capable of generating broad unity and of making it possible to bring together different organizations - Podem (Podemos in Catalonia), Initiative for a Green Catalonia (ICV), the United Alternative Left (EUiA), ecologists (Equo) and Proc  s Constituent - as well that many more people who are not members of these organizations (who were attracted by BEC, built its grassroots groups and deployed extraordinary activity throughout the campaign).

    To have as a candidate a person who is recognized by the public, able to deal with the media and ready to put their leadership in the service of this plural project. Ada Colau played this role.

It is not easy to bring together all these ingredients, but if we could do it once we can do it again. It is a factor of hope whose impact may turn out to be stronger than the electoral triumph itself.

But even when all these conditions are met, things are not easy. Only 17,000 votes and one council seat separated Ada Colau from Xavier Trias, the outgoing mayor from Convergence and Union (CiU). And the alliances that have to be formed in order to govern are looking complicated: in order to have a majority to govern,

you need 21 municipal councillors, whereas BEC has only 11. The closest political party is the Candidacy of Popular Unity (CUP, nationalist organization of the radical left), which ran a good campaign and managed to make its first entry into the municipal council, but with only three councillors. Beyond that, alliances look very difficult: the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) has three councillors, then there is the Party of Socialists of Catalonia (PSC) with four, the CiU with ten, Ciutadans (the Catalan version of Ciudadanos) with five and the Popular Party (PP) with three. With the last three formations, alliances are excluded. Everything will depend, to a large extent at least, on citizens' mobilization, maintenance of the activity of the grassroots groups, the ability to forge broad alliances in the neighbourhoods and to know how to "command by obeying". A real challenge.

However, the triumph of BEC has a significance that goes beyond just the city, because Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia and we knew from the start that both the campaign and the election results would be interpreted as a key element on a national scale. This is what is happening.

The Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC, principal component of the CiU) and its nationalist leader Artur Mas presented the municipal

elections in Barcelona as a kind of primary for the Catalan elections to be held on 27 September. They explained that to strengthen the independentist process it was necessary for Xavier Trias to win. Artur Mas may now be tempted to postpone the vote or - as they are already starting to demand - to insist again on the necessity of a unitary candidature of independentist forces. But the fact of identifying Trias with independence is only half true, insofar as Trias represents only neoliberal independentism and it is obvious that those below are tired of neoliberal policies.

The idea of presenting the municipal elections of May 24 as the "primary" was also highlighted by the leadership of the Catalan National Assembly (ANC), which requested that the various candidacies adhere to the Municipal Association for Independence (AMI) and work on the plebiscite character of September 27 by building independentist local governments capable of supporting the Parliament and the government that will come out of the election in the process towards independence.

In Barcelona this agreement has been signed by the CiU, the ERC, the CUP and Millor Barcelona (a candidacy that did not obtain representation). However, the agreement has not been signed by BEC, although three of the first four people on its list explained

that they had voted yes to the two questions in the referendum of November 9, 2014 [31]. Jordi Sanchez, the new president of the ANC, called on people to make no mistake and to vote for independentist candidates in Barcelona. In the context of these elections, this meant calling on people not to vote BEC, in other words not to vote for the only concrete possibility of change in Barcelona and to support the other candidacy that was capable of winning, that of Trias, representing neoliberal independentism. The results were clear, the working classes have had enough of neoliberalism and they voted for Ada Colau.

Did the ANC choose the right option? Fortunately the independentist movement was not unanimous on this question: there were intelligent voices, although in a minority, who warned of the danger. For example, Vicent Partal: "That sovereigntism should launch anathemas against a movement like Barcelona en Comú is a mistake, just as it is a mistake to present the municipal elections as the first round of September 27. Now it has been done, and if things turn out badly it will be difficult to resolve the problem. "

Does the defeat of Trias represent a brake on the independence movement? That is what several newspapers have announced. But do not forget that the process goes well beyond Trias and Mas and its decline has been proclaimed repeatedly, without it being confirmed in reality. Moreover, even though some media try to argue that all is well, we must recognize that there are problems. The sovereigntist parties (CiU, ERC, CUP) won 300,000 more votes compared to the 2011 elections and their representation rose from 33 per cent to 45 per cent. But in Catalonia as a whole they won 1.4 million votes, which is less than the 1.9 million

obtained on November 9, 2014, and is insufficient to ensure the triumph of independence on September 27, 2015.

Furthermore, a contradiction has arisen between the political orientation of the party of Artur Mas and the evolution to the left of the independentist vote, confirming the slogan: "independence yes, inequalities no!" The CiU lost 110,000 votes in the whole of Catalonia, while the ERC has gained 250,000 and the CUP 160 000. In terms of absolute votes, the CiU won 667,000 votes, the ERC 508,000 and the CUP 221,000. In other words, the base of the independence movement is mostly on the moderate left (ERC) or anti-capitalist (CUP), while neoliberalism (the CiU) governs and wants to continue to govern.

The challenges for the future have not changed much since November 9. We must maintain the Catalan elections on September 27 and work to get a majority in favour of independence, if we want to maintain the thrust of the sovereignty movement and create a relationship of forces sufficient to make independence effective (something which is very difficult) or oblige the state to accept a Scottish-style referendum. But we can only ensure that majority by attracting a lot of people (between 250,000 and 500,000 more than on November 9, 2014) who are not at present favourable to independence, or who are still undecided. For this it is necessary for independence to come across as being committed to eradicating corruption, to winning more democracy (in particular, with a participatory constitutional process) and putting in place a social emergency plan to counter the damage inflicted by the crisis. But this is impossible with the trajectory and the concrete policies of the CiU and Artur Mas. If on the one hand the ERC

and on the other the ANC do not dare to take the lead for an independence without corruption, without attacks on democracy, without gross inequality, the most likely outcome is that there will be no victory on September 27 (assuming that this election takes place). At present the only movement that dares to put forward a programme of this kind is the CUP, but is still too weak to impose a turning point in the situation.

Would it not be possible to repeat the success of Ada Colau with a Catalunya en Comú? That would please many of us, but it appears extraordinarily difficult. The unit of BEC was possible (unfortunately without the CUP) because it was only a municipal alternative and the national question played only a small role in it (in my opinion, too small). Furthermore, on this subject unity is very problematic, between Podem, a party that is ambiguous about supporting the right to self-determination and is not in favour of independence, the parties that are sovereigntist, but not independentist (ICV, EUIA), and an independentist party (the CUP). Besides, Podem has already taken the decision to stand on its own in the September 27 elections and the CUP has shown itself to be very unwilling to make alliances with forces that have exercised governmental responsibilities in the past (ICV, EUIA).

In spite of everything there is still hope that the repercussions of the triumph of BEC and the gains made by the CUP, the importance of the challenges and the consciousness of the opportunities that could open up will help them all to change their positions. There is still a chance to make up for lost time.

Barcelona, May 25, 2015

[Viento Sur](#).

An alternative to capitulation

16 July 2015, by **Éric Toussaint**

However the agreement reached on Monday, 13 July will lead to fresh austerity measures over several years. This completely contradicts the will of the Greek people expressed in the referendum. During the night of 15th to 16th July, it was adopted thanks to the support of four right-wing parties (PASOK, Potami, New Democracy, Independent Greeks) that brought their votes to Tsipras while 32 Syriza MPs voted against and 7 abstained.

This agreement forces Syriza to abandon essential commitments made during the 25 January 2015 election campaign, which led to its historically significant victory. Syriza has binding responsibilities towards the Greek people and it is tragic that they were not respected, especially since the people very clearly showed their support both on 25 January and 5 July 2015. [32]

The Greek government's concessions to the creditors include pension cuts (Syriza had promised to restore a 13th month to people who receive pensions of less than 700 euros per month) and an extension of the retirement age; wages will remain restrained; labor relations will become more precarious; there will be an increase in indirect taxes, including those paid by lower income earners; the continuation and acceleration of privatization; the accumulation of new illegitimate debts to repay previous debts; the transfer of valuable Greek assets to an independent fund; further relinquishing of key elements of sovereignty, giving an upper hand to the creditors in matters of legislative power, etc.

Contrary to claims that in return for these detrimental concessions Greece will get three years of respite and will significantly boost its economic activity, it will in fact be impossible to create the primary fiscal surplus announced in the plan considering the continued check on household purchasing power and public expenditure.

Harmful consequences are inevitable:

in a few months or early next year at the latest, creditors will attack the Greek authorities for failing to comply with their commitments in terms of primary fiscal surplus and will introduce new demands. Neither the Greek people nor their government will have any respite. The creditors will threaten to bring the promised disbursements to a halt if new austerity measures are not implemented. The Greek authorities will be caught up in a spiral of concessions.

The Truth Committee on Public Debt established by the President of the Greek Parliament has documented in its preliminary report made public on 17 and 18 June 2015 that the debt claimed by the present creditors must be considered illegitimate, illegal and odious. [33] The Committee has also shown that its repayment is unsustainable. On the basis of arguments derived from international and domestic law, the Greek government should have taken a sovereign decision to suspend debt repayment for the time that the debt audit takes to run its full course. Such a suspension of debt payment is quite possible. Since February 2015, Greece has paid $\hat{\alpha}$, ~7 billion to creditors without receiving the $\hat{\alpha}$, ~7.2 billion previously agreed upon in the bailout program that ended 30 June 2015. Other amounts that should have been paid to Greece have not been transferred: the interest earned by the ECB on Greek securities, the projected balance for the recapitalization of banks, etc. If Greece suspends debt payment to its international creditors, it will save nearly $\hat{\alpha}$, ~12 billion by the end of 2015 and the creditors would be compelled to make concessions. [34] A radical reduction in the amount of debt could lead the way either to negotiation or to repudiation.

Contrary to the widespread claim that suspending payment would result in exiting the euro, it would have been possible to stay in the Euro if a series of sovereign measures of self-defense

and economic recovery such as a strict control on banks, currency, and taxation (see below) had been implemented. It would have been perfectly possible to eschew the ECB's, the Eurogroup's and the EC's unacceptable and illegitimate injunctions. The Tsipras government decided otherwise, and this has led to a tragic subordination to EU supervision, to more austerity and to the selling off of the Greek national heritage.

It is now clear that negotiations cannot convince the European Commission, the IMF, the ECB and the neoliberal governments in other European countries to take measures that respect the rights of Greek citizens as well those of the people in general. The referendum of 5 July, to which those institutions were fiercely opposed, did not convince them. Instead, in contradiction with basic democratic rights, they have radicalized their demands. Without taking strong and sovereign measures of self-defense, the Greek authorities and the Greek people will not be able to put a stop to the human rights violations perpetrated by the creditors. A host of measures should be taken at EU level to restore social justice and true democracy. Technically, it is not difficult but it must be noted that with the balance of power prevailing in the European Union, the countries with progressive governments can hope neither to be heard nor supported by the European Commission, the ECB, or the European Stability Mechanism. On the contrary, these institutions as well as the IMF and the neoliberal governments are actively opposing the current Greek experiment to demonstrate to all the people of Europe that there is no alternative to the neoliberal model. However, if the Greek authorities adopt strong measures they can gain genuine concessions or simply force the institutions to recognize the decisions taken. It is also vital to find an alternative strategy by initiating massive popular mobilizations in

Greece and other European countries. The Greek authorities could draw on that to thwart the attempts to isolate them – attempts that the forces opposed to change in favor of social justice will waste no time in making. In turn, such a stand from the Greek government would empower popular mobilizations and encourage the mobilized people to have confidence in their own strength.

On top of the suspension of the payment of illegitimate, illegal, odious and unsustainable debt, here are a number of alternatives to the conditions in the agreement between Tsipras and the creditors, to be urgently submitted to democratic debate, that are likely to help Greece recover:

1. The Greek state is by far the main shareholder of the major Greek banks (representing more than 80% of the Greek banking sector) and it should therefore take full control of the banks in order to protect citizens' savings and boost domestic loans to support consumption. First, the State should have assumed its majority stake in the banks and turned them into public-sector companies. Then, the State would have organized the orderly liquidation of these banks whilst ensuring the protection of small shareholders and savers (guaranteeing deposits up to 100,000 €,–). The State would have recovered the cost of cleansing the banks from major private shareholders who have caused the crisis and then abused public support. To do this it would have had to seize part of their assets which reach far beyond the banking sector. A 'bad bank' should have been created to isolate and hold toxic assets with a view to their liquidation. Those responsible for the banking crisis should have been sued to pay once and for all. The financial sector must be thoroughly cleaned up and made to serve the people and the real economy.

2. The Greek authorities should retrieve control over the central bank. Yannis Stournaras, the current CEO (appointed by the government of Antonis Samaras), invests all his energy in preventing the changes that the people call for. He is a Trojan Horse that serves the interests of

large private banks and neoliberal European authorities. The central bank of Greece should be made to serve the interests of the Greek population.

3. The Greek authorities also had the opportunity to create an electronic currency (denominated in euros) for internal use in the country. The public authorities could raise pensions and salaries in the public services and grant humanitarian aid to people by opening credit accounts for them in electronic currency that could be used for several kinds of payment: electricity and water bills, payment for transport and taxes, purchases of food and basic goods, etc. Contrary to a baseless prejudice, even private businesses would do well to voluntarily accept the electronic method of payment as it will allow them to sell their goods and settle payments to the government (payment of taxes and for the various public services they use). The creation of this additional electronic currency would reduce the country's needs in euros. Transactions in this electronic currency could be made by mobile phones as is the case today in Ecuador.

4. The restrictions on capital flows must be maintained while the price of consumer goods must be controlled.

5. The privatization agency must be dissolved and replaced by a national asset management agency (with an immediate halt to privatizations) which will be responsible for protecting the public assets while generating revenue.

6. New measures should be adopted to achieve more tax justice, reinforcing those already taken, notably by levying heavy taxes on the richest 10% of the population (particularly the richest 1%), both on their income and on their assets. Similarly, it would be beneficial to significantly increase the tax on big companies' profits and to withdraw the tax exemptions for ship-owners. Heavier taxes should be imposed on the Orthodox Church, which only paid a few million euros in taxes in 2014.

7. Taxes on small incomes and wealth and on essential goods and services

should be significantly reduced. This would benefit the majority of the population. A whole series of basic utility services should be free (public transport, electricity, and water to a certain limited level of consumption, etc.) These social-justice measures would revive consumption.

8. The fight against tax evasion should be intensified by establishing substantial deterrents. Considerable amounts can thus be recovered.

9. An extensive public plan for job creation should be implemented to rebuild the public services destroyed by years of austerity (for example, health and education) and to pave the way for the necessary ecological transition.

10. This support to the public sector should be accompanied by measures which provide active support to small private ventures that are key elements in the Greek economy.

11. Public domestic borrowing measures may be adopted by issuing public debt securities within national borders. In fact, the State must be able to borrow to improve the living conditions of the population, for example by carrying out public utility works. Some of this work can be financed by the current budget through assertive policy choices, but government borrowing could enable other projects, broader in scope – for example the massive development of public transport to replace private cars; developing the use of renewable energy; creating or reopening local railway services throughout the urban and semi-urban sectors of the country; renovating, rehabilitating or constructing public buildings and social housing while reducing energy consumption and providing quality amenities. Such measures can also finance the ambitious plan for job creation outlined above.

It is urgent that a transparent policy of public borrowing be defined. Our proposal is:

- 1 Public borrowing should aim at guaranteeing an improvement in living conditions, discarding the logic of environmental destruction.

2. Public borrowing must contribute to a redistribution of wealth and to reducing inequalities. That is why we propose that the financial institutions, large private corporations and wealthy households be legally bound to purchase - commensurate with their wealth and income - non-indexed government bonds at 0% interest. The remaining population can voluntarily acquire government bonds at an interest rate that will ensure a genuine and positive return (e.g. 3%), above inflation. So if the annual inflation is 2%, the interest rate actually paid by the State for the corresponding year will be 5%. Such a policy of positive discrimination (similar to those adopted against racial oppression in the US, the caste system in India, or gender inequalities) will result in tax justice and less inequality of wealth distribution.

Finally, the Greek authorities should ensure that the Audit Committee as well as other committees working on the memoranda and on war damages can continue their task.

Other additional measures that can be democratically debated and implemented on an urgent basis might complement these first emergency measures based on the following five pillars:

- Socializing banks and a part of currency creation.
- Preventing tax evasion and establishing a fair tax reform to provide the State with the necessary resources for implementing its policies.
- Protecting public property, including the national heritage, and placing it at the service of the entire community.
- Rehabilitating and developing public services.
- Supporting local private enterprises.

It is also important to launch Greece into a process of structural democratic change with active citizen participation. To achieve this constituent process, Greece must convene an election of a Constituent Assembly to draft a new democratically chosen Constitution. Once the Constituent Assembly - which should operate on the basis of grievances and proposals received from the people - adopts the draft, it will be submitted to popular vote.

Exiting the Euro Zone. After the Greek Parliament adopted the disastrous agreement of 13th July on the 16th, an alternative must include the possibility of voluntarily exiting the Euro Zone if the Greek people support this prospect. This option is comforted by the Greek Parliament's capitulation on July 16th and by the very content of the agreement. Moreover the Greek people will soon understand that if they want a future that includes justice and emancipation, Greece must get out of the euro zone. In this case, the above propositions remain valid, especially the socialization of banks similar to the nationalization of France's banking system after the Liberation. These measures should be combined with a significant monetary reform, inspired by the system implemented by the Belgian government after World War II. This reform will specifically aim at deflating the incomes of those who got rich at the expense of others. The principle is simple: during the changeover to another currency, there should be no automatic parity between the old and the new currency (the existing euro against a new drachma, for example) beyond a certain limit.

The amount exceeding the limit must be blocked in an escrow account and its origin must be justified and

authenticated. In principle, any amount exceeding the specified ceiling will be exchanged at a less favourable rate (for example, two former euros against one new drachma). When a criminal origin can be proved, the sum may even be forfeited. Such monetary reform would distribute part of the wealth in a more socially just manner. Another objective of the reform is to reduce the money in circulation in order to fight inflationary trends. To be effective, strict control over capital movements and foreign exchange must be established.

Here's an example (of course the rates are indicative and may be modified after analyzing the distribution of liquid household savings and the adoption of stringent criteria) :

â,-1 would be exchanged against 1 new drachma (n.D.) up to 200,000 euros

â,-1 = 0.7 n. D. between 200,000 and 500,000 euros

â,-1 = 0.4 n. D. between 500,000 and 1 million euros

â,-1 = 0.2 n. D. above 1 million euros

If a household owns â,- 200,000 in cash, it gets 200,000 n.D in exchange.

If it has â,- 400,000, it gets 200,000 + 140,000 = 340,000 n.D

If it has â,- 800,000, it gets 200,000 + 210,000 + 120,000 = 530,000 n.D

If it has â,- 2 million, it gets 200,000 + 210,000 + 200,000 + 200,000 = 810,000 n.D

A genuine alternative logic can be triggered and Greece can finally liberate itself from its creditors' control. The peoples of Europe could again believe in a change that favors justice.

Translation by Suchandra de Sarkar in collaboration with Christine Pagnoulle, Mike Krolkowski and Snake Arbusto.

Religious fundamentalism in Muslim countries

16 July 2015, by **Farooq Tariq**

Religious fundamentalism is not just a phenomena spread by individuals, groups, mosques, madrassas or cluster of these groups: they were able to use the state powers like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan, sometimes for a short period and in other cases, they have consolidated their grip on state structures. The aim is not to spread it to one continent or over the entire world, but they will continue the struggle for implementation of their political Islamic agenda till the "judgment day".

Understanding roots of the growth of religious fundamentalism in the countries of Middle East, it is absolute a clear fact that American and British imperialism presented political Islam in a conscious manner as a counter offense to the rise of nationalist and socialist movements that spread throughout the fifties and sixties.

On 5th January 1957, the US president Eisenhower asked Congress for a resolution authorizing him to pledge increased military and economic aid, even direct US protection, to any Gulf nation willing to acknowledge the communist threat. Two months later "Eisenhower doctrine" was passed by the Congress. To save Middle East from communism, Washington turned to political Islam, or known commonly as religious fundamentalism. The "religious approach was adopted side by side the "police and military approach".

Eisenhower's doctrine was put in test in Jordan first where nationalists were brutally crushed, with Muslim Brotherhood on monarchy's side by Shah Hussein. Ever since, civil liberties are curtailed in Jordan.

Earlier in 1951, Mohammed Mosadeq, the Iranian prime minister who dared to nationalize Anglo Iranian Oil Company was overthrown in a coup staged by CIA and Ayotollah Kashani was siding with coup plotters.

These historical references are among several more that will help, at least

partly; explain how imperialism fathered Hamas, Hezbollah, Mehdi Militi, Alqaida, Taliban and Iranian Ayatollahs.

Latest in the list is DAASH that was helped initially by imperialist forces to counter the uprising in the Middle East and for the overthrow the ones not in their darling lists anymore. DAASH has emerged now as most barbarian terrorist group that the world has ever known, all on the name of "Islamic State".

You breed a beast and hope for the best is not what would happen. Breeding of religious fundamentalism in Muslim countries by the imperialist forces was their greatest political and organization blunder in forming strategies to safe capitalism from opposite ideologies.

Side by side, the Saudis have played an important role in strengthening and helping religious groups across Muslim countries in promoting their Wahabi ideology. Saudi financing goes much beyond Middle East. Saudis also gives huge cash subsidies to right wing groups in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and Maldives. Iran supports the Shia groups like Hezbollah. Kuwait and Qatar supports various groups including Hamas and Taliban in several manners.

Religious fundamentalist groups in various Muslim countries are using all sort of medieval terrorist act to frighten the opponents. The barbarian acts of burning the prisoners alive by pouring oil; killing prisoners by shooting and releasing their videos have shaken the world tremendously.

The first religious fundamentalist government in a Muslim country was in Iran. Since 1979, it has stabilized its basis initially by physically killing all opposition groups and later by forced enforcement of so called "Islamic laws" mainly against women, democracy and working class. The Iranian regime has helped fanatic Shia groups around the globe against Sunni and Wahabi Muslims.

In Afghanistan, the nine years power period of religious fanatics from 1992 to 2001 played a decisive role in promoting religious fundamentalism not only in Muslim countries but also across the globe. It introduced "Jihad" as the main weapon of spreading fanaticism. It turned Islam into "political Islam". Osama Bin Laden used Afghanistan as his base camp to plan and carry out all terrorist activities. Pakistan became a refuge for him in his later years of life.

In Pakistan, the 16 December 2014 was the most deadly attack on any school by religious fanatics. 146 were killed in a Peshawar Army Public School, including 136 children, ages ranging from 10 to 17 years. They asked the children to recite Kalma and then fired at them. It was an attack on Muslim children by Muslim fanatics. Almost 11 percent of the total children enrolled in the school were killed within 15 minutes of their occupation of the school.

Such was the devastating effect on children across Pakistan that my son aged 14 asked his mum what should he do in case they come to his school, "line up or run". The day shocked Pakistan and the world. The news of the killing of the innocent children was flashed all over the world as the main story of the day. There was a great anger and shock.

The Pakistani state failed miserably to curb the rise of religious fundamentalism. There is always a soft spot for them. For a long time, they were encouraged by the state as a second line of security. The security paradigm meant an anti-India enmity was the core purpose of state patronage.

Pakistan is situated in a region where fundamentalism has been posed, of late, as one of the most threatening questions. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan really began in the 1980s. On the one hand, the military dictator, General Zia ul-Haq, was using religion to justify his rule and was â€œIslamizing? laws and

society. On the other hand, Pakistan had become a base camp for the forces opposing the Afghan revolution. After the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the Zia allies with US, uses Islam to consolidate his power passes pro-Islamic legislation, and create many madrasahs and his policies created a "culture of jihad" within Pakistan that continues until present day.

Recently Islamic fundamentalism has risen as an alternative political phenomenon not only in Pakistan but also in the entire Muslim world. Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan is partly a link of this international phenomenon and partly caused by specific local reasons. When analyzing Islamic fundamentalism, one must understand that the religion of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism are not one and the same thing.

Islamic fundamentalism is now a reactionary, nonscientific movement aimed at returning society to a centuries-old social set-up, defying all material and historical factors. It is an attempt to roll back the wheel of history. Fundamentalism finds its roots in the backwardness of society, social deprivation, a low level of consciousness, poverty, and ignorance.

Let us go back to the example of Pakistan. Apart from creating and supporting Jihadist groups, for decades, the state and military with the financial and political assistance of imperial powers, has indoctrinated millions with conservative Islamic ideology for the purpose of safeguarding its strategic interests.

The three decades since 1980 are seen as the years of madrasahs, over 20,000 at present providing home ground for recruitment for suicidal attackers. Supported mainly by Saudi Arabia and many million Muslim immigrants, they have become the alternative to the regular school system. Most of the terrorist activities carried out in Pakistan and elsewhere are linked to the organizational and political support of these madrasahs.

After 9/11, the state's close relationship with the fundamentalists has changed to some extent but not

broken in real terms. The banned terrorist groups change their name and carry out activities on a regular basis. They hold meetings and public rallies, collect funds and publish their literature without any state intervention.

Pakistan has become more conservative, more Islamic and more right wing resulting in the growth of the extreme Islamist's ideas. Blasphemy laws are frequently used for settling personal and ideological scores. Religious minorities, women and children are the easy targets. These soft targets are paying the greatest price for this decisive right wing turn.

The rise of religious fundamentalism has emerged as the most serious challenge not only to progressive forces but also to the very foundation of a modern society. Education and health are the real targets of the fanatics.

Polio workers, mainly women, are killed by fanatics, on the assumption that a team working for the elimination of polio led to the discovery of Osama Bin Ladin, leading to his assassination. The net result is that the World Health Organization has recommended a ban on all Pakistanis traveling abroad without a polio vaccination certificate.

Religious fanatics groups are the new version of fascism. They are fascists in the making. They have all the historic characteristics of fascism. They kill opponents en mass. They have found considerable space among the middle class, particularly educated ones. They are against trade unions and social movements. They are promoting women as inferior to men, and aim to keep them in the home. Attacking the religious minorities has become a norm.

The religious fanatic groups are internationalists. They want an Islamic world. They are against democracy and promote Khilafat (kingdom) as a way of governance. They are the most barbaric force recent history has seen in the shape of "Islamic State" and Taliban. There is nothing progressive in their ideology. They are not anti-imperialism but anti-America and anti-

West. They have created and carried out the most barbaric terrorist activities in the shape of suicide attacks, bomb blasts, mass killings and indiscriminate shootings.

They must be countered. The American way of fighting back in shape of "war on terror" has failed miserably. Despite all the American initiatives of occupations, wars and creating democratic alternatives, the religious fundamentalists have grown with more force.

Fundamentalists are stronger than they were at 9/11, despite the occupation of Afghanistan.

A whole package is needed. The state must break all links with fanatic's groups. The mindset that religious fundamentalists are "our own brothers, our own people, our security line and guarantee against "Hindus", some are bad and some are good" and so on must be changed. The conspiracy theories are most favorable arguments among the religious right wingers. They do not want to face the reality.

There is no short cut to end religious fundamentalism. There is no military solution. It has to be a political fight with dramatic reforms in education, health and working realities in most Muslim countries. Starting from nationalization of madrasahs, it must go on to provide free education, health and transport as one of most effective means to counter fundamentalism.

Right wing ideas are promoting extreme right wing ideology. A mass working class alternative in the shape of trade unions and political parties linked with social movements is the most effective manner to counter religious fundamentalism.

Avoiding a "clash of barbarisms" between imperialist barbarism and that of organizations like the DAASH and Al-Qaeda, is a must. Imperialist barbarism and its dictatorial supporters oppress millions of people daily around the world. This is the fertile ground in which fundamentalist and terrorist organizations prosper. They feed off international interventions such as the ones led by the US and other western powers in

Afghanistan, the Middle East and Iraq, and those regional powers.

We must never forget one basic truth: the terrorist violence is directed first and foremost against people in Muslim countries. They attack all freedoms and all fundamental rights. They play a major counter-revolutionary role – against the progressive aspirations of the ‘Arab spring’, for example.

These forces must be fought, at a time when they are carrying out an increasing number of barbaric acts. We must fight them not only in our countries, but also through international solidarity – by fighting against imperialist wars; supporting progressive movements, resisting fundamentalism and defending victims of intolerance wherever they may be.

Fundamentalism (of all religions) and the new Far Right (xenophobic and racist) are laying claim to the ideological ground of radicalism. We need a broad international anti-fascist and anti-fundamentalist resistance front, and also an activist Left capable of providing a radical alternative.

The rise of religious fundamentalist

groups in countries with Muslim majority, owes to numbers of factors, few beyond the scope of this essay, but we can analyze this phenomenon only if looked at with historical context. Equally important is to understand the political economy of Political Islam. It is evident that Islamists were marginalized when viable left/nationalist alternative were available. The Islamists filled the vacuum left by Left/nationalists in Middle East. In their rise, overt and covert imperialist's patronage or intervention has helped Islamists gain the present mass status.

Also, important to note, that imperialism is not in clash with fundamentalism. It is only a section of fundamentalism, gone out of control that Washington and its allies are fighting against.

Unfortunately, the rise of religious fundamentalism was not taken seriously by the progressive forces around the globe. They are a new reality that poses a direct threat to their existence. The religious fundamentalist groups and right wing have adopted many political

terminologies of the Left in promotion of their ideas. They do so to find a base among masses. We should not be fooled by the use of these terminologies.

The religious fundamentalist groups are not revolutionaries, anti imperialist or radical. They are a force just in opposite direction. There should not be any political alliance or united front with these reactionaries. They must be opposed independently. The “war on terror” should not confuse us. While opposing religious fundamentalism we should not be part of the imperialist alliance of “war on terror”. Both must be opposed and an independent strategy to counter the both must be our main priority of building a viable alternative based on socialist ideas. World must be free from reaction and oppression of any kind.

Paper presented on 3rd July 2015 in a seminar held at University of Philippines, Quezon city Manila, organised by International Institute of Research and Education (IIRE Manila) along with Focus on Global South Philippine, Stop the War Coalition and several more social organisations.

The Struggle Continues

15 July 2015, by **Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis**

What were the causes of the July referendum? Many saw it as something out of the blue, a wildcard that Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras pulled out. But there is some uncertainty about his motivations – some even speculate that he thought he would lose.

I think that the referendum was clearly an attempt to get out of the trap into which the government was falling through the negotiating process.

It was quite obvious, actually, that during the downward spiral of concessions the government and

Tsipras realized that whatever they proposed was never going to be enough for the troika. By the last week in June, it was clear that the agreement that was more or less taking shape would not pass the internal test within Syriza and would not pass the test of public opinion.

Messages were sent to the leadership and to Tsipras himself from inside the party, from well beyond the ranks of the Left Platform, that this was not acceptable. In the last days of that week, the change in public opinion was also significant, with people saying that they were just fed up with this process of endless negotiations. It was understood that the troika was

just seeking to humiliate the Greek government.

Tsipras, who it has to be said is a kind of a gambler as a politician, thought of the referendum – an idea that was not entirely new and which was floated before by others in the government including Yanis Varoufakis – not as a break with the negotiating process but as a tactical move that could strengthen his negotiating plan.

I can be certain about this, because I was privy to detailed reports about the crucial cabinet meeting on the evening of June 26, when the referendum was announced.

Two things have to be said at this point. The first is that Tsipras and most of the people close to him thought it was going to be a walk in the park. And that was pretty much the case before the closure of the banks. The general sense was that the referendum would be won overwhelmingly, by over 70 percent.

This was quite realistic, without the banks closing down the referendum would have been easily won, but the political significance of that “no” would have been changed, because it would have happened without the confrontational and dramatic atmosphere created by the bank closure and the reaction of the Europeans.

What happened in that cabinet meeting was that a certain number of people “the rightist wing of the government, lead by Deputy Prime Minister Giannis Dragasakis” disagreed with the move. Dragasakis is actually the person who has been monitoring the whole negotiation process on the Greek side. Everyone on the negotiating team with the exception of the new finance minister, Euclid Tsakalotos, are his people and he was the most prominent of those in the cabinet who really wanted to get rid of Varoufakis.

This wing thought that the referendum was a high-risk proposal, and they understood, in a way that Tsipras did not, that this was going to be a very confrontational move that would trigger a harsh reaction from the European side “and they were proved right.

They were also afraid about the dynamic from below that would be released by this initiative. On the other hand, the Left Platform’s leader and minister of energy and productive reconstruction, Panagiotis Lafazanis said that the referendum was the right decision, albeit one that came too late, but he also warned that this amounted to a declaration of war, that the other side would cut off the liquidity and we should expect within days to have the banks closed. Most of those present just laughed at this suggestion.

I think this lack of awareness of what was going to happen is absolutely key

to understanding the whole logic of the way the government has been operating so far. They just couldn’t believe that the Europeans would react the way that they actually reacted. In a way, as I have said, the right wing of Syriza was much more lucid about what they were up against.

This explains also what happened during the week of the referendum at that level. Tsipras was put under extreme pressure by Dragasakis and others to withdraw the referendum. He didn’t do that, of course, but he made it clear that his next moves were the ones that the right wing would agree with, and the measure was not a break with the line that had been followed up until that point, but was rather a kind of tactical move from within that framework.

And that was the meaning of the kind of backtrack on the Wednesday before the vote?

Exactly. That Wednesday some people even talked about an internal coup happening, and Athens was brewing with rumors that Tsipras was going to withdraw the referendum. During his speech he confirmed the referendum but also made it clear that the referendum was conceived as a tool for getting a better deal and that this was not the end of the negotiation but just the continuation under supposedly improved conditions. And he remained faithful to that line during that entire week.

One thing that I didn’t understand about the process even from a public relations perspective is that he called a referendum over a series of proposed measures that he then called on people to reject and yet in the run-up to the referendum, he made a move towards the creditors that seemed to be even worse in some aspects than the measures that he was calling on people to reject.

That all gave the impression of complete amateurism and chaos.

I’ve tried to reconstitute the intentions of Tsipras essentially to answer your question about whether he thought he was going to lose the referendum and to try to clarify the meaning the

referendum had for him. But what is absolutely clear is that it unleashed forces that went far beyond those intentions. Tsipras and the government were clearly overtaken by the momentum that was created by the referendum.

They tried therefore by all means to put the devil back into the box. The way Tsipras dealt with pressure from Dragasakis “and why that Wednesday was so crucial” was that he accepted their line and sent that infamous letter to the Eurogroup and before that the letter asking for a new loan. This opened up the path for what was to come the week after the referendum.

But, on the other hand, in order to justify the fact that he could not without being totally ridiculed withdraw the referendum, he had to give some rationale for the initiative. He has to talk about fighting the austerity measures included in the Juncker package, about the blackmailing of the troika and the ultimatum he had been subjected to. And, of course, the dynamic that was developing from below at that moment seized that opportunity, took him at his word, and went ahead and to wage the battle against the troika.

This is a prime example of an initiative that was taken from above, as the result of internal contradictions, but ended up liberating forces that went far beyond a leader’s intentions. This is very important, because it also has to be understood that one of the biggest difficulties that Tsipras has to face now after the surrender of yesterday’s agreement is the very dubious political legitimacy of this move after the referendum.

We have to understand that it is a complete illusion to pretend that the referendum didn’t happen. It did happen, and it’s clear to both international public opinion and Greek society that Tsipras is betraying a popular mandate.

So on the big debate “is Tsipras some sort of Machiavellian super-tactical genius or some type of wild gambler overtaken by events, you’re definitely in the second camp?

Well, I'm definitely in the second camp provided that we clarify the following point: actually Tsipras and the leadership has been following very consistently the same line from the start. They thought that by combining a "realistic" approach in the negotiations and a certain rhetorical firmness, they would get concessions from the Europeans.

They were however increasingly trapped by that line, and when they realized that they were trapped, they had no alternative strategy. They consistently refused any other strategy, and they also made it practically impossible for another approach to be implemented when there was still time for that.

Now, in the interview he gave a couple of days ago to the *New Statesman*, Varoufakis says that a small team of people around him worked during the week leading to the referendum on an alternative plan including state control of the banks, issuing of IOUs and disconnection of the Greek central bank from the Frankfurt ECB, so on a sort of gradual exit. But that clearly came too late and was rejected by nearly all the rest of the economic team of the cabinet, by which he essentially means Dragasakis. And Tsipras, of course, validated that decision.

So we have to stress the continuity of the line of Tsipras. This is also the reason I think the word "betrayal" is inappropriate if we are to understand what is happening. Of course, objectively we can say that there has been a betrayal of the popular mandate, that people very legitimately feel they have been betrayed.

However, the notion of betrayal

usually means that at some moment you make a conscious decision of reneging on your own commitments. What I think actually happened was that Tsipras honestly believed that he could get a positive outcome by putting forward an approach centered on negotiations and displaying good will, and this also why he constantly said he had no alternative plan.

He thought that by appearing as a loyal "European," deprived of any "hidden agenda," he would get some kind of reward. On the other side, he showed for some months a capacity to resist to the escalating pressure and made some unpredictable moves such as the referendum or travelling to Moscow.

He thought this was the right mix to approach the issue, and what happens is that when you consistently follow this line you are led to a position in which you are left only with bad choices.

And the roots of that strategy: to what extent is it ideological blindness and to what extent is it pure ignorance? What is confusing to many is that you have a government composed of a large number of intellectuals, people who spent their whole lives studying contemporary capitalist political economy, both in the abstract and the concrete, people who are political activists.

How can one explain what seems to be naïveté about their political opponents? Is it thoroughly rooted ideology or was it just a lack of experience with "high politics"?

I think we have to distinguish two

elements within the government. The first is the rightist wing of the government led by two of the main economists, essentially Dragasakis but also Giorgos Stathakis. And then the core leadership, Tsipras and the people around him.

The first group had a consistent line from the outset — there was absolutely no naïveté on their part. They knew very well that the Europeans would never accept a break with the memorandum.

This is why Dragasakis from the outset did everything he could not to change the logic of the overall approach. He clearly sabotaged all the attempts for Syriza to have a economic proper program, even one within the framework that had been approved by the majority of the party. He thought that the only thing you could get was an improved version of the memorandum framework. He wanted his hands completely free to negotiate the deal with the Europeans, without himself appearing too much at the stage, he succeeded in controlling the negotiation team, especially once Varoufakis had been sidelined.

In summer 2013, he gave a very interesting interview that created a lot of buzz at the time. What he was proposing was not even a softer version of Syriza's program, but in reality a *different* program that was a slight improvement of the existing agreement that New Democracy signed.

And then you have the other approach, that of Tsipras, which was indeed rooted in the ideology of left-Europeanism. I think the best illustration of that is Euclid Tsakalotos, a person

The Alternative to Austerity

14 July 2015

In this critical moment, the Syriza government has no other choice than to reject the blackmail of the

"institutions" who seek to impose an austerity program, deregulation, and privatization.

The government must declare to the "institutions" and to proclaim to the Greek people that, even at the last

moment, without a positive compromise reflected in a program that will end austerity, provide sufficient liquidity to economy, lead to economic recovery, and include major writing-off of the debt, it is ready to follow an alternative progressive path which puts into question the presence of our country in the eurozone, while interrupting debt repayment.

In order to confront the pressures and unacceptable demands of the creditors, the process that could lead Greece out of the eurozone is a serious and complex enterprise, which should have been systematically prepared by the government and by Syriza. However, due to the tragic blockages that prevailed both in government and in the party, this has not been achieved.

Nevertheless, even now the government can and must respond to the blackmail of the “institutions” by posing the following alternative: either a program without any further austerity, providing liquidity, and leading to debt cancellation, or exit from the euro and default on the repayment of an unjust and unsustainable debt.

If required by the circumstances, the government has, even now, the possibility and the minimum of liquidity that is required to implement a transitional program to the national currency, which will allow it to implement its commitments towards the Greek people, and in particular to adopt the following measures:

The radical reorganization of the banking system, its nationalization under social control, and its reorientation towards growth. The complete rejection of fiscal austerity (primary surpluses and balanced budgets) in order to effectively address the humanitarian crisis, cover social needs, reconstruct the social state, and take the economy out of the vicious circle of recession. The implementation of the beginning procedures leading to exit from the euro and to the cancellation of the major part of the debt. There are absolutely manageable choices that can lead to a new economic model oriented towards production, growth,

and the change in the social balance of forces to the benefit of the working class and the people.

The exit from the eurozone under present conditions is a difficult but feasible process that will allow the country to follow a different path, far away from the unacceptable programs included in the Juncker package.

We should emphasize that exiting the euro is not an end in itself, but the first step in a process of social change, of recovery of national sovereignty and of economic progress combining growth and social justice. It is part of an overall strategy based on productive reconstruction, the stimulation of investment, and the reconstitution of the welfare state and the rule of law.

In the face of the intransigent behavior of lenders, whose aim is to force the government of Syriza to full surrender, exiting the euro is a politically and ethically fair choice.

Exiting the euro is, finally, a path that includes confrontation with powerful domestic and foreign interests. That's why the most important factor in addressing the difficulties that arise is the determination of Syriza to implement its program, drawing strength from popular support.

More specifically, some of the positive aspects of the exit include:

Recovery of monetary sovereignty, which automatically means regaining the capacity to provide liquidity to the economy. There is no other way to cut the European Central Bank's noose on Greece.

The elaboration of a development plan based on public investment, which will however also allow in parallel private investment. Greece needs a new and productive relationship between the public and private sectors to enter a path to sustainable development. The realization of this project will become possible once liquidity is reestablished, combined with national saving.

Regaining control of the domestic market from imported products will revitalize and enhance the role of small and medium-sized enterprises,

which remain the backbone of the Greek economy. At the same time exports will be stimulated by the introduction of a national currency.

The state will be liberated from the stranglehold of the European Monetary Union at the level of fiscal and monetary policy. It will be able to achieve substantial lifting of austerity, without unreasonable restrictions on the provision of liquidity. This will also enable the state to adopt measures which will bring fiscal justice and redistribution of wealth and income.

The possibility of accelerated growth after the initial difficult months. The resources that became inactive during the seven-year-long period of crisis can be quickly mobilized to reverse the disastrous policy of the memoranda, if there is sufficient liquidity and a stimulation of demand. This will open up the possibility of a systematic decline in unemployment and a rise in income.

Finally, by leaving the EMU, Greece will not become less European, it will follow a path that differs from the one followed by the countries of the European Union core, an option which is already well advanced in countries such as Sweden and Denmark. The exit from the EMU not only will not isolate our country, but, on the contrary, will allow it to acquire a new role on the international scene. A role based on independence and dignity, very different from the position of an insignificant pariah as dictated by the neoliberal policies of the memoranda.

The process of an exit from the EMU requires of course political legitimacy and active popular support. The referendum demonstrated the will of the people to reject once and for all austerity regardless of the challenges raised by the foreign and the domestic establishment.

It is now clear that our government has been essentially forced to exit the euro because of the EU's final refusal to accept reasonable proposals on debt relief, the lifting of austerity, and the rescue the Greek economy and society, as demonstrated by the new ultimatum sent after the referendum.

Translated by Stathis Kouvelakis.

Joacobi

Alexis, what have you done with our victory?

14 July 2015, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

In itself, it clearly summarized the paradox of the situation, whereas on this Monday morning, the proposals of a 3rd memorandum approved a little while ago by the immense majority of Greek members of parliament (251 out of 300) have already been much exceeded by the demands of the vultures of the troika. While everything is being done on the part of the European institutions and the Greek institutional parties to have the No of July 5 forgotten, it is necessary to identify the requirements of this phase ("tragic" to use the term employed by Stathis Kouvelakis, even if the spectacle of the European debates brings to mind rather the Grand Guignol) to review the crucial importance of this vote.

A referendum for nothing?

In Greece but also elsewhere, the debates on the refusal of Tsipras to take into account the extraordinary No result tend to be translated into two directions: either a betrayal which would prove the counter-revolutionary character of Syriza, or a constrained but inevitable adaptation to circumstances too unfavourable to even the slightest initiatives of reform. If such discussions are normal, we have to go beyond them to make constructive, that is, credible and inspirational, proposals, based on the popular and class message of the referendum. This obliges us to repose the question: did the referendum reveal Tsipras's great political savvy? In our view, no: it seems more to be an act of political discouragement by the Syriza leadership, seeing that all its proposals were successively rejected by a troika whose rules of operation Tsipras had accepted. Remember that the electoral program of Thessaloniki was a step backwards compared to that of Syriza. Once elected, Syriza abandoned this minimum program so

as not to exceed the "red lines" (pensions, employment law).

However, each time, the pressure of the European bourgeoisie - the Nobel Prize winner Stiglitz has clearly shown that its motives were purely political - has pushed back the lines, and each time the government has said it would be ready to find an agreement with the troika. More than a total alignment on the capitalist program as was the case with social democracy, we must rather see here the extreme naivety of a reformist party with a radical minority that did not succeed in weighing on its orientation. Following a classic reformist tactic, rather than calling for the mobilization of European workers and youth to force back the troika, the Syriza leadership called an improvised referendum - if the Yes vote had prevailed, we can think that Tsipras would have handed over the government to the right to recover his health in opposition, and if the No won, this would help better negotiate the demands imposed by the troika (a draft 3rd memorandum having been communicated to Brussels before the vote).

However, what has surprised everyone, including the revolutionary left who had played a key role in the mobilization for the No vote, was the profound movement demanding a clear break with austerity: to remain in Europe, but not the Europe of the vultures and the oligarchy, rather the Europe of the workers, of young people, of solidarity. Even if it did not emerge with these slogans, this is certainly the first time in the history of Europe that a demand such as this has emerged at such a mass level, and of course, this mass movement totally eclipsed the small mobilization in favour of a Yes vote, benefiting from media support for the maintenance of the Europe of the privileged.

Hence the shameful nature of the

position of the KKE (the Greek Communist Party) calling effectively for a spoiled ballot (and on the night of the referendum, its leader Koutsoumbas wanted to address both those who had voted No and those who had voted Yes). Hence also the attitude of the voters of the Nazi group Golden Dawn who called for a No vote without any presence in the campaign: the polls showed that 60% of its supporters voted Yes, a sign of the class polarization of this campaign!

On the evening of July 5, it was soon clear that the No vote had won, and after two hours there was a popular tide, with a huge spontaneous gathering on Syntagma Square. However, it had to wait over five hours for Tsipras's statement: we can imagine not only the surprise, shared the whole country, but also the embarrassment of the Syriza leadership. However, while the right collapsed, with its leader Samaras resigning immediately, working class neighbourhoods were celebrating this demand to break with the "rules" of austerity, Tsipras's statement immediately had the effect of a cold shower: rather than calling to prolong the mobilization, Tsipras broke this huge victory with a call for national unity and a meeting of the leaders of the party leaders the next day, to gain more support for the demands which remained those of a new memorandum.

Possible consequences of a vote betrayed

In this respect, it is difficult not to speak of treason, which reminds us of another betrayal: in 2013, when secondary level teachers voted for a strike in relation to the Greek matriculation exams ("panellinies"),

this decision was rejected by the leadership of the Olme union, namely by the currents of Pasok, the right and Syriza, the KKE having rejected the strike from the beginning, only the current formed notably by Antarsya voting for the continuation of the strike and respect for the vote of the teachers. Already, at the time, Syriza's fear of finding themselves in a situation outside the institutions was apparent. It is the same today, with consequences which are far more serious, if the current course is not reversed by the demonstrations. In effect, there are already, outside the vultures in Brussels, at least three winners: the KKE, whose leadership had been discredited during the vote, plays on the theme of "I told you so". Already, on July 10, the cortege of the KKE trade union current in the demonstration against the yes vote before parliament was very big and highly mobilized, on a very sectarian basis.

Another winner as possible: the Nazis, who could take advantage of a possible nationalist upsurge based on disillusionment. It should be said that with the trials of the Golden Dawn leaders being postponed, they are at liberty, and racist attacks have resumed. Other winners: the parties of reaction which, on the evening of July 5, did not expect so much. Thus, when one hears the leader of a right group, Theodorakis (nothing to do with the composer who called for a No vote), one wonders if it is not him who is Prime Minister. Moreover, the European leaders welcome this, to show their very special concept of democratic sovereignty.

But of course, the big loser is the Greek people and especially workers and young people: the Tsipras memorandum means attacks on pensions, the suppression of the small increase in the minimum wage in the autumn, privatization with redundancies, the return of the

evaluation sanction in the public sector -. that is, just the opposite of the meaning of the vote of July 5 and the great hope that emerged from the huge gatherings of July 3. With of course a huge risk if the anti-austerity mobilizations do not extend: disillusionment accompanied by a nationalist surge could help the Nazis bounce back, and smash the hopes of a radical left in Greece and Europe, without revolutionaries benefiting in any way. That is why what is being played out in Greece must give rise to enormous mobilizations in the country but also in the whole of Europe!

For an anti-austerity movement everywhere in Europe!

The vote on Friday in parliament has allowed us to see to what point this parliament is out of key with popular desires: the parties of the former government have voted yes, as well as their new accomplice Potami, and Syriza's ally, Anel. The KKE voted no, as well as Golden Dawn, but it is interesting to see the details of the votes of Syriza deputies: the vast majority voted Yes (251 out of 300), two voted no (members of DEA), eight abstained (including the ministers who lead the Left Platform, Lafazanis and Stratoulis, and the president of the Parliament, Konstantopoulou, as well as the former ERT journalist, Kyritsis), while seven were absent. Among those who voted yes, 15 were members of the Left Platform, who said they did not want to bring the government down by voting no.

Thus, little dispute on the part of Syriza deputies faced with this negation of the popular vote. And once

again, the official argument of Syriza to justify all its setbacks: let us get on with the negotiations, it will be a rotten agreement but once done, we will finally govern, which we have not been able to do for five months. Certainly, the polls continue to show an advance of Syriza in relation to the right, but the real question is elsewhere: even if Syriza can govern - and nothing is less sure - this would be with what politics? This morning, the new Franco-German demands relate to the now officially recognized loss of sovereignty!

So the stakes are enormous, and the European left has before it tremendous responsibilities, which involve obviously resolute and unitary action. In Greece itself, the mobilizations have been maintained - on Friday, thousands gathered in front of parliament at the call of Antarsya, anarchist trade unionists, PAME (the trade union current of the KKE), and the left of Syriza; on Sunday, a rally called by Antarsya and rank and file trade unions - and must intensify. It is the massive and resolved No which must serve as a compass, in an approach linking all the currents of the left but especially all the unorganized, without forgetting an approach calling on all the left parties, whether or not in government, to work together on a policy of breaking with austerity. The veteran Manolis Glezos has called for respect for the massive No, while the old Communist activist Bitsakis expressed the desire for gatherings of hundreds of thousands of people in the cities of Greece.

More than ever, it is clear that the break with austerity must be at the centre of demands, with a European dimension, which would be the best means of continuing to envisage a Euro zone, on the basis of economic policies based on solidarity and not the search for profits of the French and German banks or the tax havens at the heart of Europe.

Workers on the move - the Lide strike

14 July 2015, by Kevin Lin

Eight months of organizing and three separate strikes later, workers at Lide shoe factory, a foreign-invested enterprise producing leather shoes for international brands, in the industrial Panyu district in Guangzhou celebrated their well-deserved victory on May 16th. In response to the factory's plan for relocation, workers secured a range of compensations entitled to the 2,500 employees under labour laws, including years of unpaid social insurance and housing fund contributions, but also a lump sum payment of previously non-existent annual leave, maternity leave and heat allowance, as well as severance compensation for those who choose not to relocate to the new facility.

Strikes and protests sparked by factory relocation are common in this part of China, and workers are increasingly demanding companies to make social insurance and housing fund contributions potentially worth tens of thousands. Lide workers' struggle began in late 2014. Workers learned through rumours about the company's plan to relocate to Nansha district, another industrial district in Guangzhou. Production lines and workers were gradually transferred to the new facility. However, management did not discuss any settlement plan with workers. This is not surprising. But what is interesting is that fearing they would face redundancy without compensation, a group of workers approached Panyu Migrant Worker Service Centre in August 2014 to ask for assistance in negotiating with management.

Panyu Migrant Worker Service Centre is a well-known and long-established labour NGO operating in Guangzhou for close to two decades. Led by a former migrant worker-turned-barefoot-lawyer, it is one of a small number of labour NGOs in China that have gone beyond merely legal and social service provisions, and choose to assist workers in both individual and collective labour disputes. The Centre was to be instrumental in helping workers to elect

representatives, drafting agreements and strategizing more broadly. As one of the staff at the Centre involved in the Lide dispute told the media, "our role is as consultant, facilitating labour-capital collective negotiation, providing workers with legal assistance, and helping them organize meetings. We did not play a leading role. Ultimately, it has to depend on the strength of workers' solidarity." But for their role, the director and one of the staff at the Centre were to be physically assaulted and harassed first by police then by a group of unidentified men.

Although it should have been a straightforward negotiation, the dispute intensified in November 2014 when management coerced workers to sign a new contract with changed conditions, and threatened sacking those who refuse. Workers promptly rejected the contract and such intimidation. Enraged, a group of workers, who had been elected as workers representatives and who agreed to the strike the night before, initiated a strike first in one workshop that then quickly sparked a factory-wide strike on December 6th 2014. Immediately, workers representatives held a meeting to elect eleven negotiators to participate in a collective negotiation convened by management on the same day.

The meeting reached only a tentative agreement: workers were to resume work the same afternoon, and a new contract would be negotiated. However, the striking workers believing management did not address workers' core concerns rejected this agreement, and continued their strike in the afternoon. As the Weibo account of the striking workers remarked, "once workers were organized, the balance of force between labour and capital will immediately shift...Lide workers' organizing and workers' enormous strength demonstrated in the process reaffirm the great wisdom and consciousness of the Chinese working class. Solidarity forever!" While this was too early a verdict, it

did prove to be true in subsequent events.

In the evening, workers' representatives discussed their response. Indicative of the level of organization, the representatives not only elected a new team of negotiators for the second round of collective negotiation, but also made sure they delegated responsibilities to the three chief negotiators. In addition, the meeting elected three workers to manage the solidarity fund, five workers to publicize the strike on social media, and marshals to manage the picket line. The negotiators then went on to collect workers' demands and devise a proposal with specific timelines for the coming negotiation.

The next day, on December 7th the workers' negotiators proposed a comprehensive list of 13 demands, as in accordance to China's labour laws, during the second round of collective negotiation. These demands mainly focused on unpaid social insurance and housing fund, but also payment for annual leave, maternity leave and heat allowance, as well as a day-off per week for workers, but nothing on wages or union reform. But they are clear about their right to make these demands. The proposal prefaced by saying, "we are all workers of Lide shoe factory, and we have worked at Lide for many years. Although we cannot say we have created endless profit for Lide, the fact that the company can reach today's achievement is inseparable to our workers' efforts. The profit and value we have created are far above our meagre wages, but we cannot even fully enjoy social insurance and benefits".

Following a heated negotiation, the company made a unilateral announcement, which in broad terms accepted the legitimacy of workers' demands but did not spell out any specific plan or timeline. In response, the workers' chief negotiator called an all-staff meeting that produced very detailed demands and timelines and asked management to hold another

round of negotiation. The date of December 14th was scheduled for the next negotiation. Meanwhile, as the dispute intensified, workers became more involved and organized. By this stage, more than 1,800 workers had indicated their willingness to defend their rights and contributed 20 Yuan each to the strike's solidarity fund.

While workers representatives and negotiators were drafting agreement, the company management called its own all-staff meeting and announced their own plan the day before the scheduled third round of negotiation. Management hoped to pre-empt the negotiation and dictate the terms of the agreement. The details of the announcement concerning the timing and amount of payment fell short of workers' expectation. Workers representatives, after consulting with workers, rejected the company's unilateral decision.

Two days later, on December 15th 2014 workers went on strike for the second time to protest the management's refusal to negotiate. Management tried to block workshop doors to prevent workers from leaving. But workers linked arms and rushed out of the workshops. By early afternoon, the overwhelming majority of the workers took part in the strike. And the strike continued into the following day. Workers walked out of their workshops, gathered in the factory square, shouted slogans like "Bosses do not keep promise; workers demand dignity!" and marched with banners within the factory compound. When some managers took down workers' banners, a group of workers came directly to their office and demanded immediate apology. Under pressure, management agreed to new negotiation, this time under the supervision of the local union and authorities. Management made a few further concessions and workers' representatives accepted the agreement that broadly met workers' demands. While workers were jubilant for their victory, they recognized the difficulty of negotiating the remaining issue: severance compensation, and the implementation of the agreement.

Meanwhile, division among workers representatives appeared. The main negotiators allegedly acted against

workers' interests and secretly negotiated with management, and were demoted by other representatives. And when the remaining representatives and other workers held a meeting in a hotel to discuss strategy and elect new negotiators on April 19th 2015, more than a hundred special duty and assistant police broke into the hotel, bashing and arresting workers. Other workers soon gathered at the local police station, demanding the immediate release of the arrested workers. All were released.

The following day, April 20th, workers staged a strike for the third time as management failed to implement the agreement of the previous negotiation. This time, the government intervened more forcefully. The county-level Party Secretary supervised the negotiation between management and workers' negotiators with delegates from the local labour and taxation bureaus and the local branch of the trade union. The strike continued into April 21st. Another negotiation took place in the meeting room of the local county government, and the government signalled that it would move both parties to reach a compromise, largely taking the side of workers. Clearly under government pressure, the general manager of the company agreed to most of the workers' demands particularly concerning the timing of the payment, which has to be before the factory relocation planned for June 2015. Meanwhile, hundreds of workers took turn to picket the factory at night, so that no finished order could be transported out of the factory.

The next day, on April 22nd 2015 both negotiators and managers addressed to an all-staff assembly in the factory square. Still not satisfied with the timing of the payment and the lack of a written agreement, workers continued the strike and blockade. Finally, in the evening of April 23rd, the company and the county government made a joint announcement that made more concessions to workers' demands. With the stamps of both parties on the agreement, the negotiating team including a consultant from the Panyu Migrant Worker Service Centre urged

workers to accept the agreement, arguing a coordinated return to work was also a show of strength.

On April 25th, the company made a lump sum payment of housing fund and other compensations directly to workers' bank accounts, and progress was made about the more complex process of social insurance contributions, which required both workers and company to pay into local taxation bureau. The results are a considerable success for workers. All the compensations paid by the company, according to the calculation of the Panyu Migrant Service Centre, amount to more than 120 million Yuan. This would not have come about without the sustained and highly organized activism. Workers' collective actions at Lide are exceptional in their sustained organizing over eight months from August 2014 to April 2015. While each of the three strikes is brief in duration, amounting to 11 strike days including six days of factory blockades, called "factory protection" by workers, they were remarkably successful at pressuring management into negotiation and making concessions. Each time management sought to dictate the terms of the agreement by making unilateral announcement, workers pushed back.

In the process, workers held four rounds of negotiations, two elections of workers representatives, three elections of negotiators, three workers representative meetings, more than 20 consultations among workers representatives and negotiators outside of the factory, and three all-staff meetings. They elected representatives, drawing up demands, mobilizing strikes, and conducting negotiations with management and the local authorities. The intervention of the labour NGO was instrumental in lending experience and strategies. Not surprisingly with such sustained collective action, the government and management harassment and occasional violence were deployed and the threat to the safety of those involved was ever present. But the striking workers and the activists have shown, once organized, such intimidation can be defeated.

[Made in China](#)

Stock market crash shows madness of the market

14 July 2015, by **Tom Bramble**

On 12 June, shares peaked – having grown by 150 percent over the previous 12 months. Share prices have now dropped by 30 percent as panic has set in.

As the market falls, it is taking with it the life savings of many tens of millions of Chinese workers and middle class who constitute 80 percent of the investors. These investors, most of whom have borrowed money using the value of the shares as collateral (a practice known as margin lending), are now selling into a market which is falling by the day.

In some cases they are selling out of fear that the price will drop further. More often, they are forced into selling because margin lenders insist they cover their losses.

And these are the lucky ones.

With nearly three-quarters of the share market frozen by share trading suspension and the activation of loss limits (trading halted when the price of the share drops by more than 10 percent in a day), many other investors are forced to sit on the sidelines.

The human cost of the bust is tremendous: impoverishment and loss of dignity for many, resulting in anguish and suicides as the victims confront their bankrupted futures.

Cruel trick

Chinese investors have been subjected to a cruel trick.

The government has pushed workers and middle class citizens to speculate on the stock market. There is no social security in China. Health care, once free, is now expensive. Housing, once

provided by the government and state-owned enterprises, is now in the hands of the real estate and property development industry. Education costs are rising rapidly. Pensions are low.

Chinese workers therefore have sacrificed spending on everyday goods and services to build up their savings – equivalent to about 30 percent of GDP – just to avoid immiseration. They have put off having some good things in their lives to ensure that they can pay hospital bills and escape destitution when old.

Banks do not pay much interest on deposits, so people search out other methods to boost their savings. For several years, real estate boomed and investments there provided a return. Now the property market is flat and the money has switched out of real estate and into the stock market.

Investors were encouraged by the Chinese government and the media to buy into stocks. They were told that shares were a sure-fire way to riches.

President Xi Jinping's program since taking office in 2013 has been to advance Chinese capitalism by doing two things: more tightly integrate Chinese financial markets into global markets and boost consumer spending.

In relation to the first, the government has allowed Western investors to buy shares in Chinese companies via the Hong Kong stock exchange.

In relation to consumer spending, the government has encouraged people to buy shares in the hope that burgeoning share portfolios in the hands of the middle class and better paid workers would encourage them to go out and spend – to make up for the fall in demand for Chinese exports in world markets and to rebalance

domestic demand away from investment. The government also saw a booming stock market as a way to allow indebted state owned enterprises to trade expensive loans for equity financing.

The central bank, the People's Bank of China, did plenty of things to pump up the bubble to persuade millions of people to put their money into shares. It cut interest rates and it lowered reserve requirements for banks, allowing them to loan more. It gave banks access to cheap funds. And in mid-April, in a final flourish, it allowed individuals to open up to 20 share trading accounts, producing an explosion of trading activity and borrowing.

Margin lending skyrocketed, increasing six fold in just 12 months. None of this activity was matched by growth in the productive economy which, indeed, was growing at its slowest rate for many years.

The government also lent its credibility to the whole exercise by linking the share market to the strength of the Chinese leadership of president Xi. Who would bet against the might of the Chinese Communist Party whose hand reaches into every corner of the Chinese economy?

Fall out

And now it has come unstuck. Attempts by the government to stem the collapse in the share market have so far come to nothing. Every single measure seems only to convince investors that the government has lost control and worse is yet to come. Indeed, these measures, reckless as they are, almost guarantee that worse is to come.

The crash will exacerbate problems in

the productive economy. It is likely that the overnight destruction of immense household wealth will crimp consumption and thereby further depress Chinese growth.

There is concern also that the collapse of the stock exchange will have knock-on effects on the banks, as shares used as collateral for bank loans are liquidated. The property market, already well off the boil, will be hard hit by problems in the banks.

The Chinese government still has a range of fiscal and monetary tools at its disposal to limit the impact of the stock market bust on the broader economy. But when combined with other intractable problems, such as vast local government debts and chronic excess capacity across the manufacturing and property industries, the headwinds are growing.

With China now the world's second largest economy and the biggest market for dozens of countries, volatility in the Chinese economy matters like never before.

Commodity markets were already well off their peaks before this crisis. They are now in further retreat both because Chinese investors are selling off any assets they can to generate cash to meet their margin calls, and because slower Chinese growth will reduce demand for resources and energy.

Iron ore prices have fallen back to less than \$45 a tonne. Copper, nickel, aluminium and zinc prices also have declined, hitting the prospects for Australia and other commodity exporters.

Journalistic coverage in the financial papers is notable for its lack of care for the millions of those now facing a bleak future. Markets rise, markets fall. But it's all in a day's work.

Contrast coverage of China with that of Greece. The fall in shares has wiped out \$3.4 trillion from the value of the Chinese stock exchange – not much short of the total value of German GDP – and coverage in the media is restricted to the financial pages. Greek debt repayments are equivalent to US\$354 billion, 10 percent of the Chinese wipe out.

The disaster in Chinese markets has its own characteristics. But it augurs ill for the West. If the specifics differ, the same broad government-driven program of asset inflation – driving up the price of paper assets in an attempt to stimulate the real economy – has been used in North America, Europe and Japan since the global financial crisis.

In the West, it's called "quantitative easing" and has been responsible for record low interest rates, stock market growth and the creation of fortunes for financial institutions and wealthy investors. Little in the way of productive investment has followed.

In the West, too, the stripping of social welfare and the enforced reliance on superannuation in place of state pensions has meant that the fortunes of hundreds of millions of workers are now tied to the gyrations of stock markets. The harrowed faces of Chinese people currently witnessing the devastation of their futures may be our futures too.

The crash will have political consequences in China. The share market bubble was a conscious plan by president Xi to rebalance the economy. With this bust, Xi's credibility among rival party leaders will have been damaged, raising the potential for factional battles within the ruling class.

But outside the ruling class, there will be resentment among millions of desperate people who have lost their savings. They will be looking angrily at the government, which assured them just weeks ago that the stock market was a one-way bet. They will also be aware that many of the big investors bailed out of the market some weeks before the bust.

Even if this anger is not expressed in street demonstrations (and these should not be ruled out), the sense common among many Chinese that the ruling elite cares not one jot for them will only grow.

July 9

[Red Flag](#)

From the absurd to the tragic

13 July 2015, by **Stathis Kouvelakis**

The word may seem strange, or an overstatement. But how else could one characterize the total reversal of the meaning of an event as amazing as the July 5 referendum, only hours after its conclusion, by those that called for a "no" vote to begin with?

How could one explain that New Democracy's Vangelis Meimarakis and

To Potami leader Stavros Theodorakis "heads of the camp so crushingly defeated on Sunday" should have become the official spokespersons for the line being followed by the Greek government? How is it possible for a devastating "no" to memorandum austerity policies to be interpreted as a green light for a new memorandum? And to put it in commonsense terms: if

they were disposed to sign something even worse and even more binding than European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's proposals, what was the point of the referendum and the struggle to achieve victory in it?

The sense of the absurd is not just a product of this unexpected reversal. It stems above all from the fact that all

of this is unfolding before our eyes as if nothing has happened, as if the referendum were something like a collective hallucination that suddenly ends, leaving us to continue freely what we were doing before. But because we have not all become lotus-eaters, let us at least give a brief résumé of what has taken place over the past few days.

Last Sunday, the Greek people staggered Europe and the world, responding en masse to the government's call and, in conditions unprecedented by the postwar standards of any European country, overwhelmingly voted "no" to the extortionate and humiliating proposals of the lenders. Both the extent of the "no" vote and its qualitative composition, with its enormous lead among workers and youth, testify to the depth of the transformations that have been occurring, or rather that have crystallized in such a short time, in Greek society.

Friday's mass mobilizations, the climate "from below" that has prevailed over the last week, not to mention the enthusiastic wave of international solidarity, testify to the huge potential that is opened by the choice of popular political conflict rather than retreat.

But from Monday morning, before the victory cries in the country's public squares had even fully died away, the theater of the absurd began. Under the aegis of the actively pro-Yes Greek president of the republic, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, the government summoned the heads of the defeated parties to elaborate a framework for negotiation positing the euro as an unpassable outer limit of the Greek position and declaring specifically that it has no mandate to leave the monetary union.

The public, still in the joyful haze of Sunday, watches as the representative of the 62 percent subordinated to the 38 percent in the immediate aftermath of a resounding victory for democracy and popular sovereignty.

On Tuesday, the government, with no new "proposal" to make, transfers its operations to Brussels for the extraordinary Eurogroup meeting and, as is absolutely logical, finds itself

confronted with a new and even harsher ultimatum. The next day Euclid Tsakalotos inaugurates his duties as finance minister (in the interests of brevity we pass over the factor of Yanis Varoufakis' resignation, simply noting that it was a demand of the lenders) by sending to the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the organization that manages the greater part of the Greek debt, a letter requesting a new loan of €50 billion, which will be accompanied of course by a third memorandum. It is envisaged, indeed, that the parliament will begin on Monday to vote on the relevant enabling legislation.

The Tsakalotos letter continues with references to Greece undertaking "to honor its financial obligations to all of its creditors in a full and timely manner." It is obvious that despite the assurances that were heard after the proclamation of the referendum for "restarting discussions from scratch" the "negotiations" are continuing exactly from where they left off, with the Greeks lowering the bar for their opponents every step of the way.

The same day, pending the new Greek "proposals," which were to be "reliable" and detailed," Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras addresses the European Parliament and declares that "if my aim had been to take Greece out of the euro, I would not immediately after the closing of the polls have gone to make the statements I made and interpret the result of the referendum not as a mandate for a break with Europe but as a mandate for reinforcing our negotiating efforts so as to arrive at a better agreement."

This amounts to more or less open acknowledgement that the result of the referendum was being interpreted with a specific end in mind, that of negotiation at all costs and avoidance of a rift.

In the same speech, the prime minister outlines quite succinctly the philosophy that for many weeks has been informing the whole stance of the Greek side and to which the parenthesis of the referendum has not brought the slightest change:

In these proposals we have evidently

undertaken a powerful commitment to achieve the fiscal goals that are required on the basis of the rules, because we recognize, and respect, the fact that the eurozone has rules. But we reserve the right of choice, the right of being able, as a sovereign government, to choose where we shall place, and add to, the burden of taxation, so as to be in a position to attain the required fiscal objectives.

So the framework is given: it is that of the restrictive measures which secure fiscal surpluses and aim at the repayment of debt. It is incontestably the framework of the memoranda. The disagreement is over the "distribution of the burden." It involves a (supposedly) "socially more just" variant of austerity, which will be presented as "redistribution" at the same time as it perpetuates the recession (every reference to commitment to non-recessionary measures has been effaced) and impoverishment of the majority.

In the meantime, and while these soothing reassurances are being put forward that demolish what has remained of Syriza's programmatic commitments, there is a ramping up of the state of siege that the country is enduring, with the European Central Bank holding closed the spigot of liquidity and trimming even further the value of bank bonds, leading unavoidably to collapse.

And yet, despite the gravity of the situation and despite the fact that through the imposition of capital controls part of the road has already been covered, nobody, apart from Costas Lapavistas and some cadres of the Left Platform, is speaking of the self-evident and basic measures of self-protection that are necessitated by circumstances of this kind, starting from public control and nationalization of the banking system.

The explanation for this is of course very simple: anything of this kind would place Greece with one foot outside the euro, which the government is completely unwilling to do, despite the fact that even mainstream economists like Paul Krugman assert that "the greater part of the cost has already been paid" and that it is time for Greece "to reap the

benefits.”

A simple conclusion emerges from all this: with the moves it has made in the last week, the government has achieved nothing other than a full return to previous entrapment, from a much more unfavorable position, under the pressure of even more relentless economic asphyxiation. It has managed to squander the powerful injection of political capital from the referendum in record time, following at all points the line of those who had opposed it and who have every reason to feel vindicated, despite being trounced at the ballot box.

But the referendum happened. It wasn't a hallucination from which everyone has now recovered. On the contrary, the hallucination is the attempt to downgrade it to a temporary “letting off of steam,” prior to resuming the downhill course towards a third memorandum.

And it seems that the government is precisely going down that suicidal road. Yesterday, late in the evening, it sent to all members of parliament (MPs) a hastily written, twelve-page text, written in English by experts sent by the French government and based on Tsakalotos' request for a €50 billion loan to the ESM.

This is nothing but a new austerity package — actually, a “copy and paste” of the Juncker plan rejected by the electorate a few days ago. Its core is all too familiar: primary surpluses, cuts in pensions, increase in the VAT and other taxes, and a handful of measures to give it a slight flavor of “social justice” (e.g., an increase in

the corporate tax rate by two points). The document was approved by all the major ministers except Panos Kammenos, head of the Independent Greeks party (ANEL), and Panagiotis Lafazanis, the leader of the Left Platform.

The parliament has been called to vote on this text today, under the same emergency procedures that were previously forcefully denounced by Syriza. In many aspects this process can be considered a “parliamentary coup” since the parliament is asked to vote on a text that is neither a bill, nor an international agreement, giving a kind of *carte blanche* to the government to sign off any loan agreement. But this parliamentary approval has been explicitly set as a condition for any further negotiation by the German finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble.

As was predictable, and probably even planned, this proposed agreement has triggered an uproar inside Syriza. For the moment, most of the strong reactions are come from the Left Platform and other currents of Syriza's left wing such as KOE, the Maoist organization that has four MPs. In today's dramatic meeting of Syriza's parliamentary group, Lafazanis, minister of energy and leader of the Left Platform, said the agreement is “incompatible with Syriza's program” and “doesn't offer a positive perspective to the country.” The Left Platform ministers are expected to resign today.

Thanassis Petrakos, one of the three speakers of Syriza's parliamentary group and a prominent member of the Left Platform, declared:

The “no” of the referendum was a radical and a class “no.” Some high-ranked comrades insist on the “there is no other way” logic. We should prepare exiting the eurozone and say that clearly to the people. The Left has a future when it opens its wings to the unknown, not to nothingness. Those who insist on the choice of staying in the euro whatever the cost might know that it is a disaster. We need a prepared exit to open up a new path. The first steps are the public control of the banks and of the Greek central bank and a crackdown on oligarchy.

Varoufakis is also said to have opposed the agreement, as well as some MPs from the group of the “fifty-three” (the left wing of the majority), although in an internal meeting held yesterday a significant gap appeared between the rank-and-file and middle-range cadres, strongly opposed to the agreement, and the MPs, much more inclined to support it. The vote that will take place late in the evening will certainly be of crucial importance for the future developments, but also for the future of Syriza.

Whatever happens in the next few hours and days, one thing should be clear: any attempt to cancel the popular will for the overturn of austerity and the memoranda amounts to hubris in the ancient Greek sense of the term. Whoever dares to lead the country, and the Left, to surrender and to dishonor should be ready to face the corresponding Nemesis.

10 July 2015

Translated by Wayne Hall.

[Jacobin](#)

**Tsipras cedes to the Troika's arrogance:
Popular mobilization in Greece and Europe
should block the diktats of Merkel and
Hollande**

12 July 2015, by **Laurent Carasso**

If sixty-two per cent of the voters rejected the agreement it was because they know very well what they have put up with during the last five years and that any new austerity plan would push them even further into precariousness and poverty, and that the Greek people wants to regain its dignity and the mastery of its fate.

In going against this vote the Greek government is obviously responding to pressure from the Troika that has only increased in recent weeks, and even more so since Monday.

Tsipras has reached the end of a new battle of will that pits him against the troika. After the success of the referendum the signal sent by the Europeans leaders was unambiguous: no question of accepting the will of the Greek people. The first choice of alternative was to break wit the institutions and the rule of the European Union, which would mean taking control of the banking system, stopping payment the debt and organizing popular mobilization to block any attempts at internal or external sabotage. Up to now the Tsipras government has refused to take this path which, while it does not exclude the necessary manoeuvres in relation to the institutions clearly

commits the population to organize and mobilize in order to be the direct actors of their own destiny. The other choice was the immediate acceptance of the Troika's measures in order to avoid strangulation. By accepting the agreement and avoiding bankruptcy perhaps hopes to loosen the stranglehold of the debt repayments and even later to implement measure breaking with austerity. But the European watchdogs do not see it like that and will not accept any unilateral " that is to say sovereign " measure. Without a new confrontation with the leaders of the European Union these latter will implement unending austerity in Greece and elsewhere.

This is where the bar has been place by Merkel, Hollande, Junker and Lagarde. None of them can accept any longer a people thus defying the rules of the European capitalists.

They will only accept a rescheduling of the debt, or its partial cancellation, as they did in 2012, against a total submission by the Athens' government to structural adjustment plans. Claiming to speak in the name of the people, the European leaders want the Greek government and people to be in

their grip so that other people understand the lesson " there is no alternative " as Margaret Thatcher said in the 1980s.

The Greek government cannot stand up to this pressure while continuing to accept the rules of the European Union.

But we must not be spectators in this battle and the new act which has just opened. Even if Tsipras can find support in Parliament among the parties devoted to the Troika there will be many voices in Greece, in Syriza and the whole of the radical left, in the social and trade-union movements, that will be raised to remind him of the promises made before January 2015 and reaffirmed that week. These voices will find an echo with those who throughout Europe must mobilise again the European governments and the ECB so that this blackmail of the debts ceases, that this odious and illegitimate debt is cancelled and that Greek people are no longer gripped by the throat.

Like after 20 February the match has not yet been won by the Troika.

10 July 2015

Police violence in the spotlight

11 July 2015, by **Malik Miah**

That pattern manifested in a range of ways, including:

• The unnecessary and excessive use of deadly force, including shootings and head strikes with impact weapons;

• The unnecessary, excessive or retaliatory use of less lethal force including Tasers, chemical sprays and

fists;

• Excessive force against persons who are mentally ill or in crisis, including in cases where the officers were called exclusively for a welfare check; and

• The employment of poor and dangerous tactics that place officers in situations where avoidable force becomes inevitable and places officers

and civilians at unnecessary risk.

(Investigation of the Cleveland Division of Police by United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, United States Attorney's Office Northern District of Ohio, issued December 4, 2014)

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S findings on Cleveland covered the period of 2010-2013. The Cleveland

Division of Police (CDP) is typical of police departments nationwide, especially in big urban areas.

The police “not just a few rotten apples” are involved in violence and shootings directed disproportionately against African Americans, not just boys and men but also girls and women.

As the DOJ’s conclusions quoted above indicate, the violence and crimes by cops are systemic. Where the police investigate themselves with the aid of malleable prosecutors, few “bad cops” are arrested or prosecuted “the main demand of protesters across the country.

The Reforms

The Consent Decree is a 104-page document (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/266676340/Department-of-Justice-agreement-with-city-of-Cleveland>). According to the May 26 www.cleveland.com:

“Much of the consent decree surrounds changes to Cleveland’s rulebook on the use of force. “Officers would face higher standards on unholstering and firing weapons and no longer will be allowed to use guns to strike suspects as they would with a baton. And all strikes to the head using any hard object would be banned unless lethal force is justified.

“Rules for using Tasers and pepper spray also would be revised, requiring more detailed reporting and justifications for each use. If an officer used a Taser or pepper spray twice on someone, separate reports and justifications would be required.

“Officers would be required to take immediate steps to provide or secure first aid for suspects they injure, addressing an issue raised in many lawsuits that cost the city big money. It’s also an issue that has been a flashpoint in the Tamir Rice killing case, as the first officers on scene made no attempt to administer first aid in the minutes after he was shot.

“Retaliatory force” such as tussling with a suspect at the end of a chase or to mete out punishment for

disrespecting an officer “would be explicitly prohibited.”

The Decree calls for the establishment of 13-member Community Police Commission. “The panel also would help develop the new bias-free policing strategy, which would take aim at racial profiling and discrimination. Data-collection is key to the initiative. So is a stricter search-and-seizures policy that is targeted at unjust stops by officers.”

Historic Agreement

“For the first time in its history,” reports the Northeast Ohio Media Group, “Cleveland will have a civilian Inspector General review the work of police officers” one of the most extraordinary reforms to police accountability outlined under an agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice.”

Many community activists responded positively to the changes but with extreme caution. “Terry Gilbert, a prominent local civil-rights attorney, also praised the deal but urged patience and persistence.

“This is an historic agreement, which has the potential to reduce the widespread abuses in the use of force within the department [that] has existed for decades,” Gilbert wrote in an email. “The key to its success lies in the oversight by a federal judge and independent monitors. But keep in mind the reforms will take years to weed out the bad practices and attitudes that have been ingrained within the culture of the police.

“And it will require active community involvement that will stand the test of time regardless of changing politics and new administrations.” <http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index>.

The Rev. R.A. Vernon stated what many feel in the community. He said that the Consent Decree is a starting point on the path to genuine reform, though he has concerns about how the city will pay for its implementation. Vernon is cautiously optimistic about

the agreement’s power to change what he called the “culture of blue” in Cleveland.

“It’s naïve to think we will fix the system in three months, when it has been broken all the way back to Jim Crow,” said Vernon, who was among a small contingent of community leaders invited to a briefing at City Hall before the Consent Decree was announced May 26. “But there was a time when this kind of process wouldn’t have even started. Just 150 years ago, a Black person would have been killed with no repercussion. Now people of all colors are realizing that there are systemic issues that must be addressed.”

The cops’ union head, as expected, strongly rejected the DOJ’s conclusions even though the Mayor Frank Jackson signed it for the city. The African-American police chief Calvin Williams said it would be implemented.

Police “unions” generally function as protection cartels for the cops, especially those facing civil and criminal misconduct. It’s a big reason why so few cops are ever indicted or prosecuted; the few who resign do so under public pressure.

Cleveland - not Fegurson but it is

On June 8 community leaders, distrustful of the current justice system, said they would not wait for the internal police and prosecutor investigation of the cop who killed 12-year-old Tamir Rice last year while Tamir was playing with a toy gun.

Using a unique Ohio law, the community leaders went directly to a judge to request that murder charges be filed against the officers involved in the killing. The judge agreed that there is “probable cause” for the charges, but left the decision to the prosecutor’s “discretion” “exactly what the community is afraid to trust.

Cleveland is unusual only in the sense that it not only has a large African American population (some 53%) but that police chief Calvin Williams is

Black. The social composition of the police and city leadership of Ferguson, MO, a big factor in the protests there, is a non-issue in Cleveland.

What is common for African Americans, whether living in cities or rural areas, is the lack of respect by cops towards them. Skin color is a determining factor whether one is beat up, arrested or shot by cops. Whites in general are presumed to be law-abiding; African Americans are seen as suspects.

Cleveland and Ferguson police are united on the subject of "blue first" in blood and ideology. Chief Williams, since the DOJ findings, has gone out of his way to tell the media that he has never given his son "the talk" (about police attitudes toward Blacks) to his own son. He downplays the existence of racial profiling and racism in police work.

The December DOJ findings and May Consent Decree are significant for activists and the community because of the sweeping nature of the condemnation and difficulty in the future to overturn the agreed upon reforms. It puts in legal terms what

has rarely happened since the 1960s – stronger and more transparent limits on what cops can freely do.

It must be noted, at the same time, that the decree does not include an admission of guilt by either party. It is a settlement that no city council or future mayor can veto.

The Consent Decree's central weakness, however, is that it does not call for the immediate arrest and prosecution of cops who violate the laws. While ordinary folks may be taken into custody even before a grand jury or prosecutor files charges, cops sit at home or on desk duty with full pay. The Cleveland cop who murdered Tamir Rice six months ago still hasn't been arrested or charged, and continues to receive a paycheck.

The Decree also does not overhaul the Internal Affairs division.

Nevertheless, the steps taken are positive and can be used by those seeking indictments as a new handle to push for the arrest and prosecution of criminal cops. It doesn't assure implementation, but mass public pressure can use the Consent Decree to push for justice.

Broader Context

The power of mass mobilizations, and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement that is not beholden to the political parties, government or other established institutions, is why the Justice Department and Mayor of Cleveland decided to act in May and write a legally binding Consent Decree.

Its implication for the country is that other cities and states might preempt the DOJ to enact similar reforms. It shows the dynamic relationship between mass people's action and its impact on future legal steps and political changes.

Ultimately, the test for the effectiveness of the reforms will not be the paper they're written on, but the actual arrest and prosecution of cops who commit brutality and murder innocent or non-threatening African Americans for the wrong eye contact, carrying a toy gun, walking or running away, or simply being Black.

July-August 2015, ATC 177

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

8 July 2015, by **Fourth International**

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 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".

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.

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 TroÅ~ka. 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 TroÅ~ka 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 TroÅ~ka.

This "No" was only the beginning!

8 July 2015, by OKDE-Spartakos

The "NO" answer in the 5th of July's referendum was a painful slap against the traditional parties of the capital, the bourgeoisie, the systemic media. At the short period before the referendum, this disputatious alliance had extorted and terrorized the people, using all means available: Via television, through newspapers, into the work places. They only managed to make fool of themselves and to increase the class hate even more.

The referendum turned into a pure class fight, regardless of Syriza's intentions. The working class voted NO and rejected the settlement massively, despite the historical betrayal of the General Working Union's bureaucracy, which sided openly with the "YES" and with the capitalists. The bourgeoisie fought hard in favor of YES, even its parts which weren't hostile to Syriza. The majority of the middle class, having almost nothing to loose anymore, formed into line with the working class and voted NO. In contrary to those who called for national unity and amity, it became clear to everyone that two, totally different "societies" exist in the country: The exploiters and the exploited. The escalation of the class consciousness of a large part of the working class creates a vast amount of fear to those who are afraid of a clear expression of the class and choose the national unity as their main slogan, in order to promote the complacency and the social peace.

Those who tried to avoid a clear state in this class fight, naturally found themselves in the fringe. Especially

the Communist Party (KKE), promoting abstention in the referendum, served the working class poorly and, like its position in December 2008, once again conformed to middle class fears and to the bourgeoisie.

This class struggle wasn't just limited to the vote. This fight actualized in the streets, in the working places, inside the universities, in the neighborhoods. Without the huge demonstrations and marches, the fear would have prevailed and the outcome of the election would have probably been different.

The anticapitalist Left and the revolutionary organizations played the lead role at the No movement and forced pressure to Syriza not to sign the agreement initially. In particular ANTARSYA, despite the partial mistakes, became the stronger feature of the most dynamic and decisive part of the movement. The anticapitalist Left is a social and political reality in the streets and in the working places. Syriza has no right to think that this movement and this NO is its property.

The confidence this NO victory gives us should not become complacency. The next day should be a day of even harder battles. Without any doubt, Syriza will return to the negotiation table in order to discuss austerity measures regarding the workers, with the hope that the institutions will be lenient. Also, without any doubt too, the bourgeoisies of Greece and Europe, along with the bureaucrats of

E.U., will try to take revenge. We should not let the NO to be defeated, neither be "stolen", nor to degenerate to a negotiation paper.

The class front, which struggled in the favor of NO, should reject any new agreement and any new measures. It must demand wage increases and collective working contracts. It must impose the split with the IMF and the EU. It must claim for the banks and big corporations' nationalization under the workers' control, as the only solution against the banks' extortions and the bosses' sabotage. It must disarm the police, which even under the Syriza government, protected the YES and suppressed the NO demonstrations. It must completely crack the Nazis of Golden Dawn, which is going to exploit a part of the NO, a NO which they supported with false pretences, for political survival purposes. We do not have the slightest delusion that the Syriza-ANEL government will pursue such measures. We are confident that the power of the workers can achieve them.

The working class showed indeed its power against the alliance of the main parties of the capital, against the bosses' terrorism, the bureaucracy and the mechanisms of the "deep" state. With massive and tenacious struggles and long-term strikes, we must enlarge the gap which has opened inside the stability of the system and never let it close again. In this battle, the role of a strong anticapitalistic Left, independent of the reformism and the government, is crucial.

Paradoxes of Politics

8 July 2015, by **Against the Current** Editors

We'll discuss below what the Sanders candidacy might mean for the left and proponents of independent political action. It's one of a number of paradoxes in U.S. politics as the presidency of Barack Obama, so disillusioning to so many of his supporters, creaks toward conclusion. And as the nasty, brutish and long 2015-16 electoral cycle cranks up, multiple interlocking crises are rocking domestic politics along with Europe, the global economy and the international state system.

Paradox: The same Republicans who brought Benjamin Netanyahu to Congress to sabotage president Obama's most urgent foreign policy objective continue to try to wreck the pending nuclear deal with Iran. Yet he simultaneously relies on their votes to override the open revolt in his own party against the latest "free trade" corporate global coup known as the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

That's "bipartisanship." Can we please have our gridlock back? (As we go to press, after the initial defeat of fast-track authority, the maneuvers over bringing it up for another vote remain unresolved.)

Paradox: Six years onto the administration of the first African-American U.S. president and a Black attorney general as well, police killings of unarmed Black civilians occur almost on a weekly basis. Fifty years after the Voting Rights Act, Republican-dominated state legislatures have rolled out an ensemble of voter-suppression laws that amount to a game of Grand Theft Election 2016. All this occurs against the backdrop of the Great Recession during which African American and Latino economic resources have been gutted.

Paradox: President Obama, who embodied the hopes of so many environmental activists and made so

many promises to tackle the menace of climate change, presides over the historic expansion of U.S. fossil fuel extraction. By opening up Arctic oil drilling, he has all but cemented his environmental legacy as worse than that of George W. Bush.

While Obama's regulations on fuel efficiency, carbon emissions and renewable energy sources are easily reversible by a future administration, the pillaging and destruction of the Arctic would be permanent on an historical timescale. In the name of "American energy security and leadership," extraction has mushroomed on a massive scale that dwarfs even the Keystone XL pipeline scenario.

Paradox: The president elected by U.S. voters and celebrated globally with a Nobel Peace Prize for promising to end wars is now deep in the quagmires of Iraq and Syria, and launching drone strikes from Yemen to Pakistan without acknowledging large-scale civilian casualties. Now, while he openly admits there isn't yet an overall strategy for fighting ISIS, "the Obama administration is attempting to secure congressional support for a measure that would authorize expanding the war to such nations as Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen." ([On this ruinous course see Gregory Shupak, "A Disaster Waiting to Happen,"](#)

Paradox (but not really): After all the "hope and change" that the Obama presidency promised, any real progress either in law or public consciousness "limited but important" has come about through social upsurges that act independently, including by direct action, regardless and sometimes in open defiance of the administration's wishes. Most notable among these of course are the LGBT, immigration activist and Black Lives Matter movements.

We say that this is "not really" a paradox. In fact, positive change has always come about by way of struggles that were prepared to both think and act "outside the box" of what the received "realistic" political wisdom of the day dictated. That's how slavery was ended in the 19th century and Jim Crow segregation broken in the 20th, how union organizing rights were won in the great upsurge before, during and after World War II, and how the lies the Cold War Democrats told to promote the Vietnam War were discredited in the 1960s.

Paradoxes Unraveled

In truth, we could have inserted "but not really" behind those other paradoxes too. When it comes to the TPP and the fossil fuel industry, president Obama has simply proven to be what he always said he was: a pro-corporate centrist Democrat. That's where any serious analysis of the Obama presidency begins.

The same applies to other apparent-but-not-real paradoxes: the 2009-10 economic stimulus that was just enough to prevent collapse but insufficient for a robust recovery; weak financial re-regulation that's left the "too big to fail" banks larger, fatter and more dangerous than ever; an Affordable Care Act that enriches the private insurance industry and falls tragically short of the universal health care that Americans need and want. (Given the appalling pre-Obamacare status quo of close to 50 million uninsured people in this country, it has been an improvement in covering around 16.4 million.)

In all these matters, this president sought reforms that would "make logical sense" without treading on the power, profits and prerogatives of

corporate America from which the wealth of “the one percent” comes. The Republicans of course were having none of it. While Obama enjoyed Congressional Democratic majorities, the Republicans worked to ruin so that they could rule.

Once having taken the majorities, Republicans are pushing their unrestrained hard-right agenda while happily backing the TPP, on which there’s a substantial corporate consensus, and pushing Obama even further than he wants to go back into the spreading Middle East catastrophes that George W. Bush’s wars created. They’re supporting this president, as Lenin put it in a different context, “as a rope supports a hanging man.”

The balance sheet of the Obama program remains incomplete until the Supreme Court issues its ruling on striking down the tax subsidies for low-income people insured under federally run exchanges where rightwing-governed states have refused to create them. This is an absurd case on every level, where abolishing the subsidies would throw Obamacare into chaos, disrupt the insurance industry and immediately threaten the health care of millions of the most vulnerable people. This of course is exactly why the right wing is gleefully pushing it.

While legal and even corporate logic should have dictated that the case be laughed out of court, in the current bizarre configuration of this Supreme Court by all indications it will be a closely decided and politically influenced decision. Paradoxically, a ruling that effectively dismantles Obamacare might wind up backfiring on the Republicans who would be put in the nearly impossible position of coming up with a “fix.”

On even more explosive issues around racial inequality, oppression, police brutality and deadly violence, president Obama’s record of reluctance to engage has been repeatedly discussed in the pages of this magazine. This has been not only a matter of electoral opportunism, but even more of his core politics of trying to substitute elite bridge-building for militant demands and mass action.

The results are all too evident. The overt doctrine of white supremacy has gone into hiding, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court proclaims that the election of a Black president demonstrates that the Voting Rights Act is outdated. Meanwhile the plagues of mass incarceration and police brutality, the growth of inequality even during an economic recovery, and the destruction of public education in major U.S. cities — architected jointly by Obama’s own Department of Education and vicious education profiteers, another poisoned fruit of “bipartisanship” — all show the realities of race and class in Barack Obama’s presidency.

That’s exactly why the Black Lives Matter movement has erupted, and why it pays little attention to what the Obama White House says one way or the other.

All this was never a question of what Obama may have intended. It’s a matter of what flows from accepting the basic dictates of the corporate capitalist agenda.

Sanders, Clinton and the Future

For present purposes we’ll leave aside the Republican horror picture show to focus on what the Democratic “race” and Bernie Sanders in particular may portend. The fact that 100,000 folks contributed \$1.5 million online to Sanders overnight says something about their attitude to the Democratic establishment and the overall state of politics. In some sectors of the labor movement, there may be sentiment for backing Bernie rather than racing to endorse Hillary at the first possible moment.

His sharp populist critique of the banking, insurance and pharmaceutical thieves deserves due credit, and will generate genuine excitement. And the domination of big money and restrictive ballot access laws leave many people arguing, like Sanders himself, that “there’s just no practical alternative” to running in Democratic primaries.

But if Hillary Clinton for some reason

doesn’t turn out to be the presidential nominee, it won’t be because she loses out to Sanders.

Those of us on the left who support progressive independent political action, especially we who respect and admire Sanders’ impressive contributions to independent politics and his stance on many issues from the “free trade” fraud to single-payer health care, must harbor no illusions about any of this. In the end, there’s a 0.00% chance of Bernie Sanders winning the nomination, and a 100.00% certainty that when it’s over he’ll be calling on his followers to work all-out for the Democratic slate.

Another paradox of politics is that Sanders’ entry into the Democratic primaries doesn’t reflect some sort of “opening” or split in the Democratic Party. To the contrary, Sanders is filling a vacuum at the liberal end of the party spectrum, attracting supporters who are well to the left of where the party leadership stands. The instant popular groundswell around his campaign confirms this.

Elizabeth Warren will not run against Hillary Clinton. The Black leadership, and most labor officials, have no public criticisms of the Clintons’ record on “free trade,” the Effective Death Penalty Act or anything else. Much of the congressional Democratic revolt against president Obama’s fast-track-to-TPP may immediately dissipate in some sidebar legislation on punishing countries over currency manipulation — which has nothing to do with the fundamental realities of how this kind of “free trade” entrenches corporate power while pushing workers, environmental standards and social protection to the bottom in all countries.

What then is the impact of the Sanders campaign? The popular reception for Sanders’ message will likely push the party’s rhetorical campaign, and Hillary Clinton’s, a shade or two leftward. This doesn’t change the party’s real program at all, and ultimately means nothing.

Clinton herself in May has begun talking a good line on protecting undocumented immigrant youth and families from deportation. You could

even say that on this issue Clinton stands somewhere to the "left" of Sanders, who hasn't had much if anything to say about it" but that's only if you imagine that Clinton actually means what she says about this or anything else, an assumption for which there's been precious little evidence for many years now.

In the end, Sanders might do well enough to get a token speaking slot at the Democratic convention, in order to instruct his support base to "unite" behind the nominee "the same dead end as ever.

The critical question at that point might well become whether there's a viable presence for genuine independent politics, whether it's a political party formation or broader coalition. What's needed is a force embracing the rising social insurgencies around race and national oppression, mass incarceration, immigrant rights, Fight for Fifteen, confronting the environmental disaster and endless imperialist wars" along with labor's traditional economic issues" capable of attracting thousands or tens of thousands of activists out of the corporate two-party trap.

Can it be done? That's an open question, but trying to develop that alternative force certainly beats the other option: hoping to somehow sleep through 2016 and wake up when it's finally over.

[NOTE: This editorial statement for the July-August Against the Current went to press before the Supreme Court rulings on health care and marriage equality, and Congressional approval of fast-track authorization for negotiating the Trans Pacific Partnership.]

[July-August 2015, ATC 177](#)

The "no" victory and the struggles ahead

7 July 2015, by **DEA**

THE TRIUMPH of the "no" vote, which won by a margin beyond all expectations, is a great working class and popular victory. The people of Greece correctly understood the question that was being asked: Do you approve or reject the policy of hyper-austerity as it was formulated in the Memorandums and in the newer demands of the creditors? Their answer of "no" shows the true feelings "from below" of the masses of working people in Greek society, and it shows the dynamics of the balance of forces as it has developed in recent years in Greece—a Greece of both deep crisis and great social resistance.

The "no" side came together around the urban and rural workers of Greece, the unemployed and the poor. The working people spoke firmly, despite the threats—they had already felt the consequences of the closure of banks, the threats of mass layoffs, the warnings that their resistance would probably lead to a break with the euro. They faced an unprecedented propaganda campaign that the outcome of the referendum would be starvation, lack of medicine, lack of fuel, etc. The size of the "no" vote, despite all this, is an explicit mandate to break with austerity.

On the "yes" side was the ruling class and the upper middle class—in other words, all those who have an interest in making an agreement with the creditors "at any price," especially if that price means that others will be doing the sacrificing.

A clear class division emerged on this question. The soul of the "no" vote was the radical left, something that will have decisive effects in the future. The leadership of SYRIZA—which found the strength to refuse to submit to the dictates of the European Union and to call for a referendum so that the people's will could be expressed—is the winner.

The forces of ANTARSYA, which have their own political differences, gathered in the "no" camp. They have created new relationships with the rank and file of SYRIZA, relationships that will be important in the coming struggles.

On the other hand, the Communist Party (KKE), with its equivocal line—its unacceptable advocacy of neither yes nor no—refused to choose who to stand with and who to stand against. This attitude, even if it was not followed by a large part of its own members and its base, will haunt the

KKE leadership for a long time.

The result has paralyzed the political forces of the bourgeoisie. The resignation of former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras as the leader of New Democracy, just a short time after the resignation of Evangelos Venizelos as the leader of PASOK, shows that the creditors and their Memorandums of 2010 and 2012 have been left without a confident political representative inside Greece. The "post-political" social liberals of Potami (The River) are not and cannot be a solution to this problem. The fact that all this became clear at the polls during the crucial referendum creates a great opportunity for SYRIZA. But it will also exert unprecedented pressure on it.

The great victory of workers and the popular masses in the referendum, in the face of the strangulation of the banking system and blackmail of the employers, will lead to critical conflicts in the coming period, starting with the first measure of the relationship of forces: the resumption of negotiations with the creditors this week.

WE UNDERSTAND the pressures and dilemmas faced by the government; and in particular the extortion tactics of the creditors with their threats to the banking system. Those threats can only be answered by the nationalization of banks and the establishment of public control, under the direction of the workers in this sector. This is decisive for the functioning of the whole economy.

The "no" vote was an unwavering demand for the reversal of austerity. It is a call for SYRIZA to decisively implement the program of the radical left, taking all economic, political and financial measures necessary.

On this, the government and SYRIZA cannot deviate.

An agreement that would be, in essence, close to the proposal submitted to a vote in the referendum would produce disappointment and represent the overturning of the "no" victory. It would create opportunities for the bourgeois parties to reorganize and counterattack, with the aim of bringing down the SYRIZA government as soon as possible. As their representatives have stated openly, the leading European governments believe that the existence of a government of the left in Greece today is incompatible with the policies they want to impose at this "moment" of profound crisis, both at the European level and in Greece itself.

On this point, we must emphasize the internationalist solidarity shown toward the working class and the left in Greece. It emerged and was powerfully expressed in many places around the world.

We have a duty not to disappoint the hopes expressed by these demonstrations of solidarity. This is an obligation for the leaders of the government, and it creates essential tasks, not only for members of SYRIZA, but for everyone who fought for the "no."

The coming days will be decisive in the consolidation and further development of this crucial election victory.

Source socialistworker.org.

Restructuration, Audit, Suspension and Abolition of the debt

6 July 2015, by **Maud Bailly, Éric Toussaint**

So what is debt "restructuring"?

According to definitions seen in official documents published by the IMF [35] and the Paris Club, a restructuring of sovereign debt supposes, in the vast majority of cases, exchanging one set of debts for a new set of debts or of liquidities in very small quantities. In general a restructuring of debt is the outcome of negotiations between debtor countries and different types of creditors.

The restructuring of a sovereign debt may take one of two principal forms: [36]

1° a new payments schedule: by reducing interest rates in order to reduce the level of repayments and/or prolong the repayment period;

2° restructuring may include a reduction of the amount of the debt (by renouncing sums due). Most often it is old debt obligations or old contracts that are replaced by new ones. A reduction of debt may be

implemented by a repurchase of obligations with available liquidities.

A repurchase of debt is rare. About 600 restructurings took place between 1950 and 2010 but only 26 involved repurchases with liquidities. This is a very small minority of restructurings which for the most part were tied to HIPC agreements in which a part of a country's creditors were reimbursed by the other creditors. [37]

Sovereign debts are restructured in times of crisis, often following a repayment default, or in a situation of real danger of default (total or partial suspension of payments). When the IMF, the Paris Club or the Troika step in to organise a debt restructuring their prime consideration is to recreate a solvable debt situation in a country by easing the burden of repayments. Very often, in return for the restructuring they impose conditions that run against the interest of the indebted country and its people. [38] Also, the creditor's

geopolitical strategies play a decisive role in choosing which countries may qualify for restructuring of their debt and the conditions that are imposed in return.

Has there ever been debt restructuring by creditors that has been beneficial, in the long term, for debtors?

Yes, there is the particular case of Germany. [39] At a conference held in London in 1953, West Germany's creditors, US, UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, [40] agreed to an important reduction of Germany's outstanding debt. Amounts borrowed between the wars and immediately afterwards were reduced by 62.5%. A moratorium of five years was also granted and claims for war debt and damages, caused by the Nazi invasion and occupation, were postponed sine die. It is estimated that the total debt reclaimed by the Allied powers from Germany was reduced by 90%. [41] What is more, the repayment terms for

the remainder were restructured to allow Germany to rapidly reconstruct itself and its economy.

What were these favourable terms?

1Â°: Germany was able to repay most of its debt in its own currency, even though the Deutschmark had very little value. As a defeated and destroyed country, Germany's money was considered to be without great interest on the exchange markets. The Deutschmark was neither a safe currency nor a strong one. This possibility was largely beneficial. It must be pointed out that it is very rare that creditors accept that a country repay in its own currency if that is a weak currency. [42] Usually hard currency (Euro, Dollar, Yen Pound, etc.) is demanded.

2Â°: the creditor countries promised to buy German goods in order to create an export market that would in turn produce commercial income, foreign exchange reserves and a healthy balance of payments.

3Â°: the creditors accepted that, in case of litigation with Germany, the German courts would be competent.

4Â°: it was decided that Germany would not use more than five percent of its export revenues to repay debt.

5Â°: interest rates would not be higher than five percent and in some cases could be renegotiated and reviewed downwards.

These conditions allowed Germany to quickly rise out of its ashes. We must be aware that the London agreements only concerned what was, at the time, West Germany. The country was divided into East Germany (German Democratic Republic - GDR) which was aligned with the Soviet bloc, and West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany - FRG) aligned with the West. If West Germany's creditors made such concessions it was because, in the context of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, they needed a stable Germany. They feared that if big social movements arose in a shaky Germany it would be a menace to their interests. Also, they did not want to make the same mistake as was made in the Versailles Treaty in 1919

that imposed unsustainable conditions on Germany. [43] Finally, it must not be forgotten that since the end of the 19th century Germany had become the strongest economic and military force in Europe.

To summarise, not only was the burden of debt very much alleviated and much economic help given to Germany (the equivalent of \$10 billion 2014 US dollars was channelled to West Germany through the Marshall Plan between 1948 and 1952 [44]), but especially, the country was allowed to deploy an economic policy that favoured its growth. The big industrial corporations were consolidated, including the very ones that had played key roles in the First World War military adventure and had supported the Nazis and the genocide of Jews and gypsies, the plundering of the occupied and annexed countries and the enormous military production and logistic effort of the Second World War. Germany was able to build impressive public infrastructures; the country supported its industries to satisfy interior demand and win foreign markets.

The conditions in which the debt of West Germany was abolished are clearly difficult to imagine today. It will be very difficult for countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Portugal to obtain, through a debt restructuring process, similar conditions to those granted to Germany in the 1950s. It would seem impossible because of the composition and policies of European authorities, the governments of the strongest European countries, IMF policies and the current context.

What examples are there, other than West Germany, of debt restructuring favourable to debtors?

Another case of favourable debt restructuring is that of Poland in 1991. The country was granted a big reduction, of about 50%, of its bilateral debt to Paris Club creditors. They wanted to help the pro-western government of Lech Walesa [pronounced - Vawensa] that had just quit the Warsaw Pact, the military alliance between Soviet bloc countries. This debt reduction was certainly less significant than that

granted to West Germany in 1953, but the context was somewhat similar. Poland was one of the most important countries to defect to the West, adopting the appropriate neoliberal economic measures and privatisation policies, which led to Poland joining the EU a few years later.

It was during the same G7 summit in London in 1991 that Egypt was granted a 50% reduction of its bilateral debt with Paris Club members. The US and its allies were seeking support for their first Gulf War from the Egyptian President Mubarak.

It may be recalled that Iraq, too, benefited from a debt reduction in 2004, [45] after the US and its allies invaded the country on 20 March 2003. A few days later the US Secretary of the Treasury invited his G7 opposite numbers to a meeting in Washington, in which he declared the debt incurred by Saddam Hussein to be odious. He pressed Iraq's creditors to concede a very large debt reduction, so that the new authorities appointed by the occupiers, could quickly rebuild the country. The principal bilateral creditors of Iraq reduced their demands by 80%, the other creditors (private, World Bank and IMF) followed up.

What are the similarities and differences between the above cases?

What these examples have in common is that they all happened in a situation of armed conflict or extreme tension between blocs. This brought the dominant power, in this case the US, to get its partners to agree to a significant debt reduction, thus serving its strategic interests. Nevertheless, the 1953 agreement in favour of Germany is an exceptional case: the conditions that were put into place really aimed at making the country a World power once again. While the other countries were thanked for their allegiance, the aim was not to create real economic powerhouses. The gestures that were made towards these other countries are comparable to the treatment that Medieval overlords might have reserved for their faithful vassal States.

Have there been cases where the State that has its debt restructured does not continue to show allegiance?

I know of only one case that did not turn out as the creditors had planned. This was the case of Bolivia which, in 2005, benefited from a reduction of its multilateral debt within the framework of the MDRI (Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative) created by the G8, the World Bank, the IMF and other multilateral lenders, as a prolongation of the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) initiative. Here too, the lenders thought they were dealing with the authorities of a docile country. Bolivia had been exposed to “shock strategy” in 1985, in the form of a massive privatisation programme hatched with the active collaboration of the IMF, World Bank, Paris Club and the US. After twelve years of structural adjustment policies Bolivia’s economy was on its knees. So it gained entry to the HIPC initiative. Bolivia agreed to continue the structural adjustment programme and in return was granted debt relief. [46] However, Evo Morales, who was not part of the docile elite, was elected as the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo – movement for Socialism) party candidate. When this happened the debt relief had already been granted and it was too late for the creditors to back out.

This restructuring was, in this case, beneficial to the country and its population. At the same time as the debt write-off happened, the government turned its economic policy around and refused the measures imposed by the creditors. This is important, because many countries that have obtained comparable debt relief have continued 5 or 10 years more of structural adjustment policies and the economies and the populations have not benefited. Note that whenever creditors granted significant debt relief it was in their strategic interests to do so.

And Argentina? After the biggest suspension of payments in history, in 2001 the Argentine government renegotiated its sovereign debt. What were the conditions?

Yes! In 2005 and in 2010 Argentina’s debt was restructured through an

exchange of bonds: old bonds were exchanged against new ones. This was the situation: in December 2001, the Argentine authorities, under the interim President Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, unilaterally suspended debt repayments amounting to \$80 billion to private creditors and the Paris Club (\$6.5 billion). Notice that they did not suspend payments to multilateral organisms such as the World Bank, the IMF and others. This action came about in a situation of economic crisis and popular revolt against the policies that had been followed for years by successive neoliberal governments, of which Fernando de la Rúa was the most recent. It was thus under pressure from the street at a time when the treasury was empty that the Argentine authorities suspended debt repayments.

Argentina’s suspension of payments of sovereign debt bonds lasted from December 2001 to March 2005. This was beneficial for the Argentine economy and population. Between 2003 and 2009, Argentina’s economic growth was between 7% and 9%. Some economists claim that this growth was due to the rise in the prices of Argentina’s raw materials exports, but it is clear that if Argentina had continued paying off its debt, the increased exports income (in other words, the taxes levied on the exporting companies) would have been used for the debt repayments.

Between 2002 and 2005 the Argentine authorities negotiated with their creditors to convince a majority of them to agree to exchange the bonds they held for new ones, written down by 60%, but with a stronger guarantee and a favourable interest-rate indexed on Argentine GDP growth. This was debt restructuring by exchange of bonds: by March 2005, 76% of outstanding bonds had been exchanged, a majority that was considered sufficient protection against the 24% who refused the exchange. The authorities announced, at the time, that those who refused the exchange would have no further occasion to negotiate.

So why did Argentina restructure its debt again, in 2010?

Indeed, in contradiction with previous

declarations and despite the protests of Roberto Lavagna, the minister of economic affairs who had taken part in the 2005 negotiations, the government of Argentina did open a new round of negotiations with the remaining 24% of the creditors. A new agreement was reached with 67% of that 24% in 2010. In all, 8% of all the bonds whose payment had been suspended since 2001 “held out” against both agreements. Both agreements contained clauses stipulating that in case of litigation involving the new issues, US courts would be the competent jurisdiction. [47]

In the end, can this restructuring be considered a success? Can other governments follow the Argentine strategy?

The Argentine authorities claim success because of the 50% to 60% reduction of debt stock. But, in return, big concessions were made: high interest rates; indexation to Argentina’s GDP growth, which means that the country actually agreed to hand over a share of its growth profits to the creditors; renouncing sovereignty in case of litigation

In fact, Argentina’s example is not the one to follow, but it is a source of inspiration. It shows the interest of suspending payments and the limits of a negotiated deal that makes big concessions to the creditors. The current situation is evidence enough. Firstly, the amounts in fact reimbursed to creditors are considerable; Argentina itself acknowledges that it has reimbursed \$190 billion since 2003; Secondly, although Argentina’s debt was certainly lower between 2005 and 2010, today the amount of Argentine debt is higher than it was in 2001. Thirdly, Argentina is under heavy and unwarranted pressure to reimburse the Vulture funds that refused to accept the exchange offers, after not only a New York judge but the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Vulture funds. [48]

Was Ecuador’s public debt not reduced in 2009 after the audit of 2007-2008? Can this be called “restructuring”?

No, in the case of Ecuador, this is not a genuine restructuring. [49] There was no exchange of bonds, especially since there was no negotiation with creditors. This was a very good thing. Old bonds were not replaced by new ones. Ecuador unilaterally suspended repayment of its public debt and told private creditors holding the bonds, called bonos Global 2012-2030, [50] that it would repurchase them with a 65% haircut and a fixed term. These bonds no longer exist. Ecuador did not restructure its debt: it never negotiated interest rates or rescheduling of repayment on new bonds with its creditors.

Ecuador combined this with an integral audit of its public debt, which preceded its suspension of repayment. In July 2007 a Commission for an integral audit was created in which I took part. It worked until September 2008, i.e. for 14 months, during which there was constant dialogue between the government and the commission members. They submitted their recommendations to the government and to the President. On this basis Ecuador's executive power decided to suspend repayment of part of its debt, as explained above. Only later in 2009 did it force creditors to accept a significant haircut.

Some figures: Ecuador's Public Treasury bought bonds that were worth \$3.2 billion for less than \$1 billion. It could thus save about \$2.2 billion on the principal of its debt, to which should be added \$300 million in yearly interest for 2008-2030. All in all, Ecuador saved over \$7 billion. This released new financial resources for the government to increase its social expenditure in the fields of health care, education, social assistance and in the development of communications infrastructures.

Can we say that this approach is more beneficial than the one chosen by Argentina?

Clearly it is. One might also wonder whether Ecuador's determined position prevented the country from getting renewed access to the financial markets. The answer is no. While in 2009 Ecuador forced its creditors to accept the reduction I've just mentioned, only 5 years later, the

country floated new bonds on the financial markets, at an interest rate of some 7%, which was below the rate paid by Argentina or Venezuela (Venezuela has regularly repaid its debts since 1990 at rates that vary between 12 and 15%). This goes to show that radical positions do not necessarily foreclose traditional financial sources.

So in the case of Ecuador, we can say there was a unilateral sovereign act suspending repayment and repurchasing debt without negotiation, combined with a debt audit that was most beneficial for the population.

What about Iceland after the banking system collapsed in 2008?

In the case of Iceland, there was no restructuring either. What happened? Iceland's private banking system collapsed in October 2008, because of its fraudulent financial ventures. On paper the value of Icelandic banks amounted to over ten times Iceland's annual production of wealth! Banks had grown out of all proportion, as in Ireland or indeed Belgium at the same time. After the banking system's collapse, Iceland's government defaulted on what was owed to those private banking institutions and refused to pay the €3.5 billion that the governments of the UK and the Netherlands demanded to offset compensation they had paid out to their nationals who had money in those banks. It must be emphasized that this measure was taken under popular pressure: social mobilisation was very powerful and succeeded in countering the intentions of the country's government on several occasions. Two referendums were organised, also due to popular pressure. In the first one, over 90% voted against compensating the UK and the Netherlands. [51] Negotiations resulted in a new compensation plan, which was again turned down by about two thirds of voters in a second referendum. This refusal to compensate was combined with another strong measure taken by the government, namely a strict control on capital flows. [52] Indeed, as a response to a situation of crisis in which the country was threatened with massive capital evasion by

national and foreign large corporations, Iceland's government prohibited capital transfer. It is noteworthy that the IMF in this case turned away from its usual position and even supported these measures!

These various measures were beneficial for Iceland, whose economy recovered much quicker than in European countries that took another approach, such as Ireland or Greece that bailed out their private banking sector, accepted loans from the Troika as well as a restructuring of their debts, and paid their creditors.

It is interesting to add that in the case of Iceland in January 2013, the Court of Justice of the European Free Trade Association States (more commonly known as the EFTA Court), which also includes Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland, dismissed the UK and the Netherlands' request that Iceland be ordered to pay the compensation they demanded. The Court of Justice considered that there was no element that could compel a government to take over the duties of private institutions. This conclusion is worth bearing in mind as it could provide jurisprudence to settle other disputes. [53]

In the case of Iceland, there was no debt restructuring either but, again, a unilateral sovereign decision not to pay the compensation demanded by two much stronger economic powers.

In 2012, the Troika did a restructuring of the Greek debt: what went wrong?

The context was as follows: from early 2010 Greece was subjected to speculative attacks by the financial markets that demanded excessively high interest rates for roll-over loans. Greece was close to defaulting because it could not refinance its debt at reasonable rates. The Troika interfered with a structural adjustment Memorandum'. It would grant new loans for Greece to repay its creditors, i.e. essentially European private banks. [54] Those new loans were accompanied by austerity measures that had a brutal, even disastrous, impact on the people's living conditions and on economic activity.

In 2012 the Troika restructured the Greek debt owed to private creditors only, namely the private banks, of EU member states, that had already largely withdrawn though they still held some Greek debts, and other private creditors such as Greek worker's pension funds. This restructuring involved cutting Greek debts to private creditors by 50 to 60%. The Troika, which has been lending money to Greece since 2010, restructured the Greek debt itself but refused to reduce the amount to be paid. The operation was presented as a success by mainstream media, Western governments, the Greek government as well as the IMF and the European Commission. They attempted to fool international public opinion and the Greek population into believing that private creditors had gone to considerable lengths to ease Greece's dramatic situation. Actually the operation was not at all beneficial for the country in general, and even less for its population. After a temporary slackening in 2012 and early 2013, the Greek debt has been steadily rising again and is now beyond the highest point attained in 2010-2011. The conditions enforced by the Troika have resulted in a dramatic fall in the country's economic activity: the GDP went down by over 25% between 2010 and early 2014. The living conditions of the population have dramatically deteriorated: violation of economic and social rights and of collective rights, regression of the retirement system, sharp reduction of public health and public education services, massive layoffs, drop in purchasing power. Moreover, one of the conditions for any debt relief was a change in the applicable law and the relevant jurisdiction in case of dispute with creditors. All in all this debt restructuring goes against the interest of the Greek population and of Greece as a country.

How does this restructuring of the Greek debt compare with the Brady Plan that was implemented in countries of the South as a consequence of the 1982 debt crisis?

The Brady Plan [55] was implemented in some twenty indebted countries towards the end of the 1980s. It was a

way of restructuring debts through an exchange with US-guaranteed securities on condition that creditor banks reduce the amount of what is owed to them and that they use the money in the economy. In some cases the debt was reduced by 30%, and the Brady bonds guaranteed a fixed interest rate of about 6%, which is most favourable for bankers. The problem was thus solved for the banks and merely postponed for indebted countries.

We find the same components in the debt restructuring imposed on Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus as in the Brady Plan.

1Â°: In the Brady Plan, just as in the Memoranda imposed on the countries on the 'periphery' of the EU, governments of the major powers and international institutions step in instead of private banks as main creditors. All those plans thus aim to make it possible for private banks to withdraw as main creditors of the countries concerned without significant loss since they are replaced by governments and multilateral institutions such as the IMF. This was what happened with the Brady Plan. In Europe, the European Commission, the European Stability Mechanism [ESM], the ECB and the IMF have gradually replaced private banks and private financial institutions as creditors.

2Â°: All those operations are obviously accompanied by conditionalities that enforce the implementation of austerity measures and neoliberal policies.

3Â°: The other common point lies in the ultimate failure of such restructuring for indebted countries. Even neoliberal economists such as Kenneth Rogoff and Carmen Reinhart [56] acknowledge that the Brady plan was not beneficial for the countries concerned: debt reduction was much more limited than had been announced and in the long term the amount of debt actually increased and the amounts paid are very high. We can now say the same about Greece, Cyprus, Portugal and Ireland.

If restructuring the debt is not a solution, what should be done to

help those countries solve the debt issue?

Those countries ought to unilaterally: 1) set up an integral debt audit - with citizens' active participation; 2) suspend debt repayment; 3) refuse to pay the illegal or illegitimate part of it; and 4) demand a reduction of the remainder. The reduction of what is left after cancellation of the illegitimate and/or illegal part can be seen as a form of restructuring but it cannot be isolated as a sufficient response.

What happens if a government starts negotiating with creditors without suspending repayment?

If there is no suspension of repayment or public auditing, creditors are in a dominant position. We mustn't underestimate their manipulative skills that can lead governments to unacceptable compromises. Suspending debt repayment as a unilateral sovereign decision creates a new power relationship with creditors. Besides, with a suspension, creditors have to crawl out of the woodwork. Indeed if you deal with securities holders without suspension of payments they remain anonymous since securities are not nominal. Only if they topple this power relationship can governments create the necessary conditions for them to enforce measures that legitimize their action in domestic and international law. In the cases of Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus the troika is the major creditor and would be obliged to go to the negotiation table.

In this case could governments initiate negotiations to show public opinion that creditors have an unacceptable position and that they have no choice but to turn to unilateral actions?

Yes, but such an approach has its pitfalls. Creditors may create confusion in the people's minds claiming that the governments are unyielding and delay negotiations. Whereas the countries need urgent solutions and cannot afford to use their tax revenues to repay their debts.

The adequate moment to suspend debt repayment must be defined according

to each country's specific conditions: the people's degree of consciousness, urgency, creditors' blackmail, the general economic situation of the

country... In some circumstances auditing can occur before; in others, the two must occur simultaneously.

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24M elections - a new era in the regime's crisis

6 July 2015, by **Josep María Antentas**

The electoral repercussions of the dynamics created by the 15M in 2011 were not felt until the European Parliamentary elections of May 24, 2014. They were characterized by a double effect. First, a deep crisis was forced upon the semi-bipartisan system that dominates Spanish politics. The main parties, Partido Popular (Popular Party PP) and Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Workers' Socialist Party PSOE), obtained 4,070,643 votes (26.06%) and 16 seats and 3,593,300 votes (23%) and 14 seats respectively. Taken together, they added up to 7,663,943 votes (49.06%) and 30 seats; only 60% of what they obtained in the previous European Parliamentary elections of 2009, when both parties reached a total of 12,812,161 votes (80.9%) and 47 seats.

Second, there was the entrance of Podemos, with 1,244,605 votes (7.96%) and five seats. Not content to be a new minor actor, Podemos emerged with the aim of destabilizing the entire political map. On election night Pablo Iglesias commented:

Few were expecting this kind of outcome for us, but allow me to make a call for mourning and to be on alert. The caste parties have obtained one of their worst results in history. But I have to say that, for now, we have not achieved the objective of overcoming them ... Podemos was not born to play a beholding role; we were born to get everything and we are going to get everything. It might be that for many this outcome has been a success, but we are not satisfied.

Therefore, after the European elections, a twelve-month period of exciting opinion polls commenced in which Podemos experienced continued growth in the Spanish electoral polls, catching up with and surpassing the voting prospects of both PP and PSOE. January 2015 was the outstanding moment of such lineal progression, when several polls situated Podemos ahead in voting intentions. Since then, with the local and regional elections in sight, Pablo Iglesias's party started to witness a tendency toward stagnation and decline in the polls, which occurred within the context of strong attacks from the media and political establishments against Podemos's leading team and the media fabrication of a new political alternative, an "ideal brother-in-law" called Ciudadanos, imagined as a kind of "right wing Podemos" and headed by TV-star Albert Rivera. Rivera's party introduced a discourse focused on democratic regeneration and anti-corruption and a lampedusan recipe of "reasonable change" that did not alter the neoliberal agenda and aimed at reviving the idealized post-Franquist transition's mystified spirit of "consensus." Rivera was thus able to have a niche in the Spanish political agenda by appropriating Podemos's novelty effect, dangerously closing in the voting intentions.

The appearance of a new and unexpected rival created some doubts for Podemos leaders. Some of them advocated turning toward the center in order to compete with Ciudadanos for the votes of the moderate and less politicized middle classes. Others, with Iglesias at the front, chose a

return to the origins to recuperate the freshness lost since the May 2014 European elections' campaign, favoring a discourse that used the struggle against austerity and the crisis as its focal points, and which linked corruption with neoliberal policies. Behind this strategy there was the recognition that Podemos's natural social electoral base was mainly comprised of the most crisis-affected popular layers, with the pauperized middle classes and the working class having predominant weight. Reinforcing a hold on those sectors was Iglesias's self-imposed challenge for the coming elections.

The 24M certified the deep transformation of the party-system that had been underway: a hit-but-not-sunk bipartisanship (PP-PSOE), a steady and rising candidate (Podemos), and a fourth in discord (Ciudadanos), which was gaining strength, though it gained less of what was expected and was far from taking first place (one million votes, 4.49%, in the municipal elections and results in the thirteen regions that go from 2.9% to 12.5%). The new political map forged after Podemos's surfacing in Spanish politics is characterized by a bipartisanship in crisis, following a sinking trend with an unimaginable rate. Seriously damaged, with an unprecedented credibility crisis, PP and PSOE still possess important social anchorages and have yet to succumb to free-fall mode. PP got six million votes in the local elections (27%), two million less than in the previous ones in 2011, and suffered an electoral punishment of huge proportions by losing in most of their

strongholds, such as Madrid and Valencia. PSOE obtained its worst municipal electoral result since the first democratic elections in 1979, although its 5.6 million votes (25%), 775,000 less than four years ago, showcase that it still has not entered into an irreversible “pasokization” mode and can still aspire to become part of a government coalition.

Podemos achieved unheard-of results for a newly created party, obtaining an exceptional institutional weight for a political force that aspires to incarnate an alternative for change, with percentages that go from 7.9% to 20.5% in the thirteen regions where elections were held (Aragón 20.5%, Castilla la Mancha 9.7%, Murcia 13.1%, Asturias 19.02%, Castilla y León 10.2%, La Rioja 11.2%, Baleares 14.7%, Extremadura 7.9%, País Valencia 11.2%, Canarias 14.5%, Madrid 18.5%, Cantabria 8.8%, and Navarra 13.7%). It was not able to overcome either PP or PSOE in any of the regions, but those remarkable results allow Podemos to maintain its aspiration to become a winning party with the capacity to contest for the electoral victory against PP and PSOE in the next general elections. In real terms, Podemos by itself is not a party that could assert itself vis-à-vis the PP or PSOE. However, the possibility of that happening in the future cannot be discarded. This is the paradox of the current situation.

Podemos only ran in the regional elections and declined to do so in the local ones because, as the party acknowledged, it would not have been able to manage the explosive

institutional growth that an opposite decision would have entailed: the election into office of thousands of councilors. Podemos’s decision of not officially running in the local elections opened the door to the setting up of the so-called candidacies of “popular unity,” which were constituted by local Podemos affiliates, independent activists, and other minor left-wing forces. This way, municipal candidacies became experimental channels for new unity and junction frames, strongly rooted in local realities.

These tickets obtained the best results for the left, reaching historical milestones like the victory in Barcelona (with 25% of votes) by Barcelona en Comú, led by activist Ada Colau, speaker of Plataforma de Afectados por las Hipotecas (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages-PAH), the most popular social movement in recent years; or in second place, with 31.85%, Ahora Madrid (which will obtain the Mairie with support from the PSOE), headed by Judge Manuela Carmena. Besides Barcelona and Madrid, a considerable number of medium-sized cities have also seen victories by these popular candidacies.

The municipal successes open the door to a previously unknown situation: access to the heights of institutional power by breakthrough forces. Therefore, a new era emerges in which they will have to face how to govern relevant localities like Madrid or Barcelona and implement, under adverse conditions, a program favorable to the social majority and

opposed to the financial and business sectors, whose nervousness is already palpable.

Undoubtedly, the credibility of Podemos and the other popular forces will depend on the scorecard of these new governments. The results will be instrumental in reducing or augmenting the expectation for social change.

Without having acquired the historical importance of the municipal elections of April 12, 1931, which propitiated the proclamation of the Second Republic two days after, the local and regional elections of May 24th have been a relevant moment in this long political crisis that began with 15M and was propelled by the emergence of Podemos one year ago. With 24M we have one landscape, fluid and unstable, where it is difficult to discern the underlying trends and the conjunctural rallies.

Just a few months away from the general elections that are going to be held in November, the traditional parties have not been able to stabilize the situation, nor have the new breakthrough forces been able to assert themselves. Cracked by an unprecedented crisis, the post-Franquist political regime faces the general elections with equally encompassing uncertainty in both those who fight to keep it afloat and those who advocate for a “democratic revolution,” to use Ada Colau’s expression. A new period in the history of the Spanish State is opening.

[Public Seminar](#)

Peace, development and the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL): The Lumad view

5 July 2015, by **Timuay Alim Bandara**

The contentions of those opposed to IPRA are that IPRA had not been implemented in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao; that

there is no implementing mechanism in the ARMM; that IPRA will defeat the true essence of autonomy; that IPRA runs counter to some provisions

of the BBL; that no profit-sharing arrangement in terms of utilization and extraction of natural resources.

On the other hand, they claim that in the BBL, there is equitable sharing of income and the opportunity for the creation of a political district for Indigenous Peoples in the Bangsamoro. Hence, they say, there is no need of IPRA in the BBL.

The above stated reasons are not sufficient grounds to drop IPRA in the BBL. Actually, these can be harmonized by Congress and in fact these are subject of lobby for amendments on the Bangsamoro Transition Committee version of the BBL.

It has to be emphasized that IPRA is a social and landmark legislation to correct historical injustices inflicted against the Indigenous Peoples. IPRA recognizes the right to self-determination of various distinct indigenous people nations in the context of Ancestral Domain and self-governance and empowerment.

The motivation of the other indigenous people leaders to drop IPRA in exchange for indigenous peoples' rights in the BTC version of the BBL are obviously to avail of the promised flooding of investments, business opportunities and political accommodations by way of creating a political district for indigenous people in the region. However good they maybe, those positions do not reflect the core agenda of indigenous peoples – the building of a society reflective of the hopes and aspirations of indigenous peoples.

The hopes and aspirations of indigenous peoples are well entrenched under IPRA provisions on the rights to ancestral domains; the right to self-governance and empowerment; social justice, human rights and cultural integrity. The weaknesses of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples as a government institution mandated to ensure the implementation of IPRA should not be confused as weakness of IPRA. In fact, the provisions for genuine empowerment of indigenous peoples are actually not yet realized partly because of the lack of understanding or focus on the part of NCIP and largely because the Indigenous Political Structures are not strengthened.

There can only be real empowerment of indigenous peoples if the Indigenous Political Structures are fully functional following the customary laws on the management of ancestral domains and economy; traditional governance structures and justice systems; culture and spirituality. This is the kind of society we need to build to ensure that indigenous peoples will not be further marginalized and disappear. Then IPRA may be enough for all government units including the autonomous regions to implement for the protection and promotion of indigenous people rights. So this is not obsession to IPRA as many would say as the reason of non-Moro indigenous peoples in ARMM cry for IPRA in the BBL.

The reality is that ancestral domain areas cut across different political boundaries of barangays, municipalities, provinces and the autonomous regions. The development framework within ancestral domains is to be determined by the tribes through the formulation of the Ancestral Domains Sustainable Development and Protection Plan based on IPRA. The challenge is how strong or consolidated the indigenous peoples are that they would not be drawn into the local government units' and autonomous regions' development plans given that these government units have resources to fund their development plans.

There are glaring contradictions on these two development frameworks. There is the belief that the assurance of a lifetime job and employment among indigenous peoples is guaranteed only if the natural resources within their domain is protected and secured by the community. On the contrary, the new development paradigm introduced by the State such as establishment of regional industrial centers, construction of transportation routes, development of tourist spots, construction of sea and airports, putting up of communication facilities, operation of agro-industrial plantations, mining operations, putting up of malls and other project beneficial to global trading are destructive to nature and therefore are not assurances of job placement

and sustainable employment for indigenous peoples.

However, we do not reject everything about the other development plan. There are good aspects that are also useful in indigenous peoples' daily lives today. Therefore, we need to establish safety measures to protect our people in the community by way of taking into consideration the following in determining what is good development:

Safeguard our closeness to nature

Development should ensure that we are not distanced from our closeness to nature. Development that threatens to destroy nature and remove us from our lands is not acceptable because nature is the basic sources of our livelihood ranging from food, medicine, shelter and even customs and tradition. Because of this, nature is considered the extension of the life and body.

Collective leadership

Development should ensure that collective forms of leadership and decision making are respected. We particularly abhor attempts by large corporations to get their way through divide and rule enticements aimed at individuals in our society. Development process must respect the need to group consultation so that we can determine by consensus what the whole community desires.

Communal ownership of property

Development should ensure that communal ownership of property is not threatened. This includes the communal ownership of the land, hunting and fishing grounds, worship places and other major source of economy in the community for no one

has the sole control over the product of mother earth. We use these resources in order to live a humane, dignified life.

Equal status in society

Development should ensure that equal status in society is preserved. We reject development that elevates some individuals into prestigious and powerful positions at the expense of others in the community. We value every individual in our community irrespective of life opportunities that may have come their way for advance education, employment and so on. Thus we reject development that values one human being over another for, we, the children of mother earth are equal.

The “good fedew” as basis of justice, peace and development
Development should ensure that the good fedew remains the basis of justice and development. Goodfedew

is the presence of a good feeling, peace of mind and the physical well-being of every individual member of the community. This is the strongest foundation of peace, justice and development in tribal society. Any undertaking that runs counter to the “kéfiyo fédew” is not good development.

Lumut Minanga or progressive pluralism

Finally, development should ensure that progressive pluralism is maintained and enhanced. Development should be respectful of all people including the tri-people neighbors of Mindanao like the Moro people, the Christian majority Filipinos and the Lumad.

Though there is no single organization governing the indigenous people communities, the above stated principles are common among Indigenous Peoples. These practically

connect the different indigenous people communities into one global village.

Prospectively, the best allies of the indigenous peoples in this struggle are the working class because though they are far apart in terms of living conditions, they are the direct victims of the latest global development framework.

Both need job placement and employment opportunities with fair working relations “the former need fair working relation with nature and the latter need fair working relation with their employer.

The indigenous people employer is nature and the working class employers are business managers who are doing massive destruction and deformation of nature in pursuit of producing more and more profit to the detriment of indigenous peoples and the working class.

5 June 2015

[Interaksyon](#)

Viewpoints from the Greek left

3 July 2015, by **OKDE-Spartakos, Red Network**

NO! No agreement - End the negotiations

The Greek government, despite its persistent efforts, failed to win the confidence of the institutions (EU, IMF) and the favor of the hegemonic bourgeois classes of Europe. The vows of loyalty to the repayment of the debt “fully and timely” and the renunciation of unilateral actions, as well as of any measure which would be contrary to the capitalist normality, weren’t enough.

SYRIZA adopted ever more measures and reforms in full accordance with

the memoranda (privatizations, retirement age increases, de facto reductions in wages and pensions, increasing VAT in mass consumption products etc.). The EU and the IMF, however, along with their domestic partners in Greece, don’t want just harsh measures, but they also want to destroy any hope (and illusion) reflected in the election of a government that was elected with the slogan of terminating the memoranda, even if this slogan was withdrawn the very first day after the elections.

Thus, the leadership of SYRIZA was at a dead end. Unable to sign its political death sentence, that is to say an agreement so shameful that would lead the party to the fate of the socialdemocratic PASOK of George

Papandreou, and under the pressure of the demands of the workers’ movement, the government launched a referendum. We have no illusions about the intentions or the ability of SYRIZA to conflict with the interests of the capital and the capitalist institutions. However, voting NO to the proposals of the troika, may open, under appropriate conditions, a new round of political crisis of the system that exploits and oppresses us.

In the following days, the traditional parties of the capital, ND and PASOK, together with the ultra-neoliberal POTAMI, which altogether react fiercely to any taxation of corporate profits and of large incomes and demand even lower wages, will start ranting, in any way possible,

about the alleged disaster that a rejection of the proposal of the institutions will bring. They will blackmail bluntly, brandishing the alleged disaster of an exit from the euro-zone. The working class, however, has already experienced the real disaster: austerity and capitalist aggressions. The working class cannot and should not be terrified, because they have nothing substantial to lose by capital controls or by a general crisis in the euro-zone. On the contrary, when capitalism, the system that exploits us, shakes, we are preparing for battle. What will give us a rupture with the EU and the IMF is confidence and will for struggle, not despair and fear.

This rupture cannot be made merely by voting. Neither the elections could not have been the magic solution to get rid of austerity, nor can it be the referendum. The next few days should find us in the streets, so as to confront the reactionary, pro-capitalist gatherings like "We stay in Europe", but also so as to ensure that there is real rupture, and that the referendum will not be just a negotiating maneuver of Tsipras and the leadership of SYRIZA. Besides, let's not have any illusion: if it weren't for the mass mobilizations, not only the recent ones but, mainly, those of all previous years, there would be no jam with the institutions and the memoranda would proceed normally.

Our NO to the proposals of the troika is in no way a vote of confidence to the government of SYRIZA - ANEL. Besides, their own proposals, the text of the 47 pages and the amendments made afterwards, are also totally unacceptable and represent a new memorandum, maybe a little bit more mild, but including new cuts and privatizations. Actually, in certain issues, the proposals of the government are even more reactionary than those of the institutions: defending armament programs, preservation of the tax breaks for shipowners. We will say NO to these proposals as well, with our struggles.

On Sunday, July 5 we vote NO.

NO: so as to open the rift, and not to begin a new round of negotiations

NO: in the streets and not only in the ballot

NO: to this and to every agreement

NO: overall to the euro-zone, the EU and the IMF, and not just to their proposals

NO: to the Troika, but also to any other administrator of the same system

OKDE-Spartakos CC

28.06.2015

OKDE

A no vote against blackmail

All eyes are on Greece in the days before a July 5 referendum on whether to accept even more drastic austerity measures or to defy the blackmail demands of Europe's rulers.

Banks are closed, and the Greece's left-wing government has imposed some controls on capital for at least the week leading up to the vote—a necessary response to the financial strangulation of the country by the European lenders and their political representatives. This has produced a tense atmosphere as Greeks scrape together whatever cash they can and line up to buy groceries and other necessities. But there are also signs of anger and resistance against the extortion tactics of the lenders—like the large "vote no" demonstration in Syntagma Square in Athens on June 29.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announced the surprise referendum after European political leaders and representatives of the "institutions"—the European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—issued their latest ultimatum for even deeper cuts, sped-up privatizations and higher taxes on working people in return for extending the bailout of the Greek financial system. Since SYRIZA won national elections on January 25 and formed a new government, Tsipras has offered Europe substantial concessions from

the radical left party's commitment to reverse austerity, but the lenders want capitulation.

The other pressure on Tsipras and the government has come from the influential left wing of SYRIZA, which is demanding a rejection of further retreats and a change of course, starting with a commitment to use all available resources to carry out measures that will aid workers and the poor. The following statement was issued by the Red Network, an alliance of revolutionary organizations within SYRIZA that participate in the party's Left Platform.

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to reject the ultimatum of the lenders, to refuse to sign a new Memorandum imposing hyper-austerity, and to ask for an expression of the will of the people by referendum on July 5 is a decision that transforms Greek politics.

This decision proves that the challenge begun by the social struggles to resist austerity and continued with the elections on January 25 is deeper and more durable than the supporters of neoliberalism, both local and international, anticipated. It also frees SYRIZA and the popular hopes for change from the dead end of continuing negotiations with the lenders and the impasse resulting from the February 20 agreement with the lenders.

This proves what we, among the most critical voices inside SYRIZA, insisted in the months that have passed since the election: SYRIZA cannot be easily transformed into a party of austerity.

FROM THE moment that Alexis Tsipras announced the referendum, a battle of extreme importance was underway.

The "institutions" and the leaders of European governments are directing their threats of economic strangulation not only against the left-wing government, but against the workers and popular masses of Greece.

Their local partners, including the "internal troika" of New Democracy,

PASOK and Potami, are watching with fear as the international guardians of the Memorandums—the regime of hyper-austerity imposed throughout all these years on behalf of the bankers, industrialists and shipowners—are losing their hold.

Everything indicates that the coming days will see a furious battle in which both sides will go all-out. The working class and popular masses have every reason to fight this battle with all their strength, aiming for a clear victory. For a NO: No to Memorandums, no to austerity, no to debt, no to the blackmail of the lenders.

Winning this battle will renew the left-wing dynamic expressed in the working class and popular vote for SYRIZA in the January elections. It will show again that the political and social balance of forces has shifted in Greece.

A victory on July 5 will not return the situation to where things stood when the negotiations collapsed, with the despicable ultimatum of the lenders. A victory will underline, with even more urgency, the need to follow, quickly

and unilaterally, the minimum anti-austerity measures that SYRIZA promised in the Thessaloniki program before the elections. That includes stopping debt repayments to the lenders, with the goal of cancelling a majority of the debt; carrying out measures to improve the life of workers and poor; and financing all of this with heavy taxes on corporations and the rich, renationalizing large public enterprises and putting the banks under social control.

Every necessary measure, whether political, diplomatic or financial, must be taken to ensure that this policy is carried out. Our response to the blackmail of the lenders is that the struggle against austerity will not be governed by concerns about the euro system or by the consent of the rulers of Europe.

In the days ahead, two distinct worlds will collide. On the one hand, there is the world of those who have benefited from the brutality of the Memorandums—the local elite and their international patrons and partners. They will rely on blackmail involving the banks, on draining

capital out of the country, on causing a chaotic crisis.

On the other hand, there is the world of workers and the poor, which has no advantages to rely on other than the fact that it is vast majority of people in society.

The victory of one of these worlds will mean the defeat of the other. Therefore, no individual or organization on the left can hesitate for a moment. It is our duty to immediately build an alliance that will organize for a no vote—an alliance that can win a victory for the working class and the popular masses.

Regardless of the mistakes that have been made since January, and without underestimating the unprecedented difficulties we face in this moment, now is not the time for academic debates. It is time for struggle. It is a time to claim a great victory for the working people of Greece that will significantly change the existing state of affairs.

Red Network (Syriza)

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