

Against the neocolonial consolidation of the Eurogroup - Lessons from Greece for a Europe of social and democratic rights

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In defense of the Greek OXI, for a Europe of social and democratic rights.

Against the neo-colonial consolidation of the Eurogroup

What lessons can we draw, in the member countries of the European Union (EU) and beyond, from what we must call, and denounce as such, a “financial occupation of Greece” [\[1\]](#)? As Stathis Kouvelakis has stated forcefully, the OXI, this magnificent “no” from the Greek referendum “has not been defeated”. [\[2\]](#)

But the strategy of the leadership of Syriza – of not confronting the EU, hoping for a compromise that would be “positive” for everyone – is a failure. This is nothing compared to the discouragement that a “pro-memorandum mutation” of Syriza would produce – something that is not yet inevitable and will be decided in the coming weeks and months. On this level, the real question is not Grexit or not, but that of power (with or without the euro), with whom, to do what?

The reflections that follow are part of the logic of the positions synthetically expressed by the title of the collective Attac /Copernicus work *Que faire de l'Europe: désobéir pour reconstruire* [\[3\]](#): that a fight within/against the EU is possible and necessary by accepting the need to go through breaks and crises. Does the Greek crisis change this judgment? How can we prepare the breaks?

The events in that are taking place in Greece require us to take a step back to broaden the debate – at the same time as urgent solidarity activities. We must identify and denounce the neocolonial mechanisms that are at work, without accepting that they are inevitable, far less go along with the threatening projects of a consolidation of the “historic core” of the EEC, arrogating to itself full powers against all its peripheries, which are dispossessed of rights. But where are the peripheries in globalized capitalism and in its old European heart in crisis?

Beyond the leadership of Syriza, which clearly had an optimistic view of the outcome of negotiations with the leading bodies of the EU, recent contributions emanating from Die Linke [\[4\]](#) confirm that within the European Left there existed a “positive” perception of the Union, implying a closed attitude towards the positions of the left of Syriza. The recent contribution of Alexis Cukier (“reflection after the defeat”) on the whole of this phase [\[5\]](#) goes back over these perceptions and their evolution.

But a critical approach to the EU, one that is realistic about the inevitable confrontations, also

existed. And hostility to what we call austerity policies was the basis of an ongoing recomposition. The logic of a break with the leading bodies of the EU also included, and still does, a variety of positions within the radical left in Greece and elsewhere, which it is essential not to simplify. The agreement on the slogan of Syriza, “not one sacrifice for the euro” implied preparing for a possible Grexit. But for some of the radical currents, any negotiations were already a betrayal, or were at best illusory, not to say counter-productive: the renunciation of battles within the EU “for another Europe” in favour of a general line of exit then became a general orientation.

Most of the left criticisms of the choices made by the Syriza government present as “confusion” and quasi-oxymoron what made possible the victory of Syriza: the commitment to fight within the EU against austerity policies. This is to accept the idea that the implementation of this double line by the leadership of Syriza, without preparing the confrontation, was the only possible choice - whereas the internal debate in Syriza about this had not finished. But it is also to consider in general that the only “clear” choices were/would be either to stay in the euro by submitting to the Eurogroup, or Grexit (and a general line of exit). Given the politically dramatic character of the first option, it is difficult to see how not to choose the second. But this binary choice is problematic and dangerous. It tends to consolidate a “line” whose coherence should be to propose to the anti-austerity left all over Europe to fight to leave the EU - and EMU - without conducting battles within the EU, asserting that they are impossible.

For Frédéric Lordon [6], “the future of the left is being played out between these four propositions”:

1. The euro radically prohibits any possible progressive politics.
2. If any further demonstration was necessary, the criminal treatment meted out to Greece over six months of brutalization (re-baptized “negotiation”) proves that the enterprise of “transforming the euro”, or the hypothesis that “another euro is possible” are chimeras which, by successive disillusiones, lead only to a dead-end and to political despair.
3. To abandon to the far right (which by the way will do nothing with it) any political perspective of finishing with the euro and its institutions is a political error which condemns the European left to indefinite impotence.
4. Unless it wants to continue yearning for what will not happen - “another euro” and the “social Europe” that goes with it - the rearmament of the European left therefore imperatively calls on us to imagine life after the euro.

The debate that was transcribed in *Regards*, between Etienne Balibar and Cédric Durand [7] also outlines a choice which would counterpose the trap of falling back on nationalism and that of submission to the EU. The pessimistic theorization of Cédric Durand was clearly expressed in the book that he coordinated and introduced *En finir avec l'Europe* [8] - where he advocated “putting Europe between brackets.” As I wrote, contesting him in a critical article - “Finish with the EU, not with Europe”, which I will develop further - he omitted in his presentation of the debates the existing positions of struggle within/against the EU, incorporating the idea that it would be necessary to provoke a crisis of this Union (positions such as those expressed by Michel Husson and Pierre Khalfa.)

Such an orientation was clearly expressed in the collective Attac/Copernicus book, mentioned above. For example: “It would be illusory to think we can get out of the financial, economic and social crisis that the peoples of Europe are enduring without going through a European political crisis. Once this crisis has opened up, the left government in question would take a certain number of unilateral actions, explaining that they are intended to be extended to European level.

"It would be a question of taking unilateral cooperative measures, explaining that they are not directed against any other country, in contrast to competitive devaluations, but against the economic and political interests of the oligarchies and that the more countries that adopted them, the more effective they would be. So it is in the name of another conception of Europe that a government of social transformation will have to implement measures that break with the present rules of the Union. Disobeying the treaties would open up a confrontation with the European institutions in the name of the interests of all European peoples." However, the road of resistance to the EU (or of a "transitional logic" of struggle against/within the European Union) was outlined for the first time in Europe by Syriza. It was a major turning point which seemed to be taking shape in the referendum. Lordon pays lip-service to it, in the article quoted above, and then quickly skips over it: what is the point of discussing how such an approach could have been developed, since he wants to hammer home that it is an "illusion" and go back to the binary choices defined above?

This binary approach is being consolidated with the present course of Tsipras, identifying any orientation of struggling "for another Europe" with a naïve "Europeanism" having a "positive" approach to the EU and believing in its reformability. A healthy and effective debate implies fully integrating all the positions which exist.

The position defended here - struggle within/against the EU - is in the logic of "not one sacrifice for the euro" that Syriza defended. It therefore differs radically from any submission to the dictates of the European authorities (which implies making a judgment on compromises that are acceptable or not, the "red lines" not to cross) - and therefore the question of power (better to resign than to carry out the policies of the Right along with it).

This view shares with the supporters of the line of exit the criticism of any illusions about the possibility of reforming the EU without challenging frontally its institutions and treaties. So we must not be afraid of this confrontation (as it is formulated in the resolution of the Belgian LCR "trial of strength in Greece: the urgency of the strategic debate on the left" [9] of which I share the general approach - I will come back later to certain of its hypotheses), but prepare it in the best conditions possible.

Such an objective made it necessary to combine (not to oppose or ignore) certain proposals that were discussed or partially put in practice in order to consolidate the relationship of forces behind the negotiations: the perspective defended here, the Grexit, should be envisaged in the way that Michel Husson has expressed it [10], as a "last resort", putting first of all the accent on the denunciation of the "illegitimate, illegal and abhorrent" debt, while applying the slogan of Syriza "not one sacrifice for the euro", protecting ourselves from the blackmail of the Eurogroup by unilateral measures, as was proposed by Eric Toussaint [11] or prepared in part by the minister Varoufakis (control over the movements of capital, nationalization of the banks, including resumption of control over the Central Bank, preparing a parallel currency, suspension of payment of the debt). And one can imagine that the "fiscal money" also defended by Thomas Coutrot [12] could also integrate solidarity networks oriented towards agriculture and services (health, education ...): in these domains, existing forms of self-organization and solidarity could be further inserted into a national strategy of resistance on several fronts: against the external pressures of both the Eurogroup and the world market, against the internal oligarchy and its armed forces, against the policies of "solidarity for the 'good Greeks'" advocated by Golden Dawn.

It's easy to criticize from afar, and there is no question here of claiming to have ready-made solutions, but rather of being attentive to the solutions that are invented in Greece itself. Beyond the indispensable rejection of unacceptable memoranda and neocolonial blackmail, the debate on the left is legitimate and necessary, as Etienne Balibar, Sandro Mezzadra and Frieder Otto Wolf invite us to have it in their text, "Le Diktat de Bruxelles et le dilemme de Syriza". In a difficult overall

situation it is not responsible to claim to have a “good” option that should obviously prevail - as Michel Husson emphasized in a debate organized by *Mediapar* (“eurozone or Grexit”) when contesting the “rosy” hypotheses of exit advocated by Cédric Durand [13]. The “econometric” assessment of what would happen in case of exit is impossible: as has been well emphasized by one of the most popular and brilliant advocates of Grexit in the left wing of Syriza, Costas Lapavistas, the attempts at “model-building” assume stable hypotheses, whereas the context is inherently unstable. Except that he used this argument against those who predicted the worst chaos. It also applies to other hypotheses.

We must keep open debates that some people close too quickly: firstly, the Greek scenario has not exhausted all its possibilities. Nor does it enable us to test the certainties that are affirmed by supporters of exit - and the fear of uncertainty has certainly exerted an influence. But we must clearly accept the fact that no alternative progressive policy can stabilize and expand in Europe without challenging frontally the EU. How breaks could take place is far from being a simple question when the relationships of forces are unfavourable. But, as Michel Husson and Pierre Khalfa in particular have affirmed in many articles, although exit from the euro is not a convincing axis of struggle nor a general solution, to exclude it is an error which did not enable Greece to hold fast in the face of the risks of a Grexit imposed by the creditors, or a new financial and monetary diktat.

But beyond the conjunctural and contextualized debate, is exit a general and priority axis of progressive struggles within/against the EU? Is it even an obvious choice for “all the peripheral countries” as the resolution of the Belgian LCR mentioned above proposes? That the answer is far from obvious becomes clear as soon as you ask, where do the peripheries stop? Already, the Spanish state is much less “peripheral” than Greece. What about Italy? What about the peripheries of the East... and in the heart of the “centre”?

Although we should no more exclude a national exit than strategies that are common to regional regroupments, we must stick to the “concrete analysis of concrete situations” and take a step back, especially to choose “our terrain” of struggles.

Beyond polemical debates that we must avoid, it is obviously necessary to consider the weakness of the mobilizations in support of the Greek people. Certain analyses (such as those of Frédéric Lordon and Cédric Durand) make that the illustration of a general impossibility, confirming in their eyes (“if that was necessary”) the impasse of orientations fighting for a “social Europe” within the EU. For them, at the root of the problem there are not (only) unfavourable political relationships of forces - if it was a case of that, why should we give up? An argument supposedly non-conjunctural, more “organic” is in fact mobilized: “the absence of a European people” or of a “European political space”.

You can in any event try to get out of this straitjacket alone. But it is illusory, in the context of the close overlapping of foreign direct investment and of the whole of European economic, financial and commercial relations, to think that you can escape from the power that has been consolidated without attacking it at the level where it exists.

We must take to heart the Greek experience and the psychological impact of this crisis within the European left, both in terms of solidarity and to prepare other national/European “Oxi”.

It is on this point that we must deepen the debate.

Outlines of axes of reflection/action - from the Greek crisis... to the Ukrainian

crisis

The responses on this subject are part and parcel of the resistance to the planetary social war that has characterized global capitalism since the turn of the 1980s. But German unification and the dismantling of the USSR radicalized the neoliberal offensive, giving to the “new [European] old world” (in the words of Perry Anderson [14]) a particular social violence and institutional forms since 1989.

But a major new shift has been underway since 2009: the EU could have broken up years ago. The European choice has on the contrary been affirmed in the dominant countries and spheres - with the exploitation of the so-called “sovereign debt crisis” to try more than ever to give constitutional force to the pseudo-“golden rules”, excluding from political and democratic debate - including within national parliaments - the choices made in economic policy: even the emergency programme of Thessaloniki and the outlines of popular expression of a democratic choice that were expressed by the “Oxi” were radically contradictory with this logic.

What is being done, without being stabilized and legalized, is the consolidation of a European “hard core” of the Eurogroup, which imposes its norms on everyone else - member states, official candidates or “partners” of the EU - such as Ukraine.

So it is not because it would be “progressive” that it is important to fight within/against the EU, but because it is both dangerous and attractive for various reasons - and not without weak points: the hypothesis that it would be even worse to be totally “peripherised” without being able to fight along with others for the rights of members of the Union, will remain credible. Insubordination to neocolonial behaviour will remain strong. The principal weakness of this construction is its “political” dimension in the broadest sense - not only the need to win legitimacy and to go through elections... but also to legitimize its “civilizing” enlargements, which supposedly bring social cohesion and peace.

Hence the strategic axes - and specific struggles - on which to reflect/act.

1. A unifying strategic axis - the necessary emergence of a socio-political “hegemonic bloc for another Europe”; it must be built within/outside/against the EU and its policies, in defence of national and social rights at a European level, with or without the euro, against all forms of xenophobia and against all its “civilizing” wars, internal and external.

What is at stake is the recomposition of the continent, with its international geopolitical dimensions (with which I cannot deal here [15]. After having analyzed in detail the precise content of the undemocratic and antisocial European institutions, and denounced the “Europeanist” propaganda which valorized the EU as “progressive”, he envisaged various scenarios for a crisis of the EU. The least probable being the ones most coordinated across several countries, he settled on a more realistic scenario - the rise of a social and political movement in one member country...

“Confronted by the institutions of the European Union,” it is ‘necessary to have known how to prepare politically and programmatically’ for an ‘offensive mounted in an EU member country’ in order to “respond at two levels’: on the national level, an alternative policy must take shape, dramatically and visibly reversing ‘before the whole of Europe’ the priorities, in favour of the working class, women and youth, in order to take immediately a series of favourable social measures and accompanying measures to protect this political experience.

Essentially, it should reply to doubts about the possibility of organizing such a national break in an economy that is open and Europeanist, faced with the hostility of the EU. Bearing two objectives in

mind; to find support within the country, to speak to Europe, its peoples and the popular movements and secondly - on the level of the EU, such a government 'breaking with the EU' should neither leave the EU nor denounce its treaties. The goal is to amplify the crisis in the EU by using to the maximum the time and space that the institutional rules of the treaties permit, in order to generate support and mobilization in Europe so as to trigger a pressure-outflanking on the other governments of the EU'. Therefore, 'the demand to renegotiate the treaty' will take on real force in a situation of crisis, subject to two conditions: 1- to give it a precise concrete content which, in fact, dismantles the treaties; 2- to couple this with a democratic proposal that removes the process of decision making from the hands of governments to transfer it to the people."He continues by analyzing the challenges that would then be posed (what proposals?) and stresses that the crisis of the EU crisis can also come "from the bourgeoisie." "In both cases - a crisis coming from the left or a crisis coming from the right,"he adds,"the question of democracy as an effective means of taking decisions would be posed, and immediately at a European level. (...) It is in such a perspective that a slogan of general propaganda appears as useful, namely the convocation of a Democratic Congress of the Peoples of Europe. It would be an assembly elected in each country which wants to become involved. Its objective would be to debate and define one or several projects of a Constitution..."

If this is the strategic horizon, any people - member or not of the present EU or EMU - could be involved; in the framework of this democratic and social approach, starting from the popular aspirations and demanding to go back to square one with the EU treaties; the mobilization of the populations concerned in each country is obviously decisive, against all sexist, racist or homophobic exclusion. No scenario should be excluded, regional groupings or thematic conferences of the peoples (in defense of common goods - health, education, water)...

But whatever the scenario that sets things in motion, including the outbreak of a crisis starting from one country, the unilateral measures that are taken should always be turned "towards Europe" - the speeches of Alexis Tsipras on European democracy and the assertion that the referendum against the austerity plans concerned all European peoples were beautiful illustrations of these demands. But it is from the peoples, in Greece and in Europe, not from the authorities and the ruling classes of the EU that support for such objectives should be expected.

Here I would like to conclude these general remarks by rejecting any model of a European nation state, unitary and centralist, ignoring the historical diversity of its peoples and the rights of self-determination of each people.

In other words the fact that no "European people" exists is in no way an argument against a European strategic approach (on the political and institutional plan, not only as a juxtaposition of social struggles). We must therefore think about projects that combine different levels of decisions, of financing and of democratic control of the choices decided on by the sovereign peoples - following a principle of "subsidiarity" to be re-examined, by seeking the appropriate level for effective management depending on the problem that is posed, but also on the political and social context. I will not develop here some ideas that have already been proposed in a contribution written elsewhere [16].

The comrades of the Portuguese Left Bloc (in the resolution referred to above) have recalled that the European Left (of which they are part) has in recent years made a series of proposals to change the institutions of the EU. The article of François Vercammen quoted above is in part a critique of the approaches aiming at the "democratization" of the EU without a crisis. But that does not mean that the proposals developed are not interesting. They can help to concretize the debates, without having the illusion that the EU authorities as they exist could, simply through "negotiations", modify the institutions of the Union.

In the “European public space” that it is urgent to build, all these proposals can be discussed. But the first and most urgent thing is concrete - and must be directed “around” the Greek people, in concrete solidarity with its combats, against a neo-colonial European construction.

2) Decline these strategic issues around specific axes, proposing logics of solidarity and the means of achieving and protecting rights.

a)contesting the illegitimate, illegal, odious character... of European debt and of institutional transformations which exploit them: against the memoranda but also against any exit imposed by creditors.

The panorama of the recent transformations that the EU has undergone are largely unknown to its populations - and even to activists. The legacy in France of what had been the vast movement of popular education turned towards the action of contestation of the European Treaty in 2005 must be taken up again, updated and extended. The easy option of denunciation of Germany alone is just as erroneous as is the ignorance of the key role played by the “couple” of Franco-German leaders in the major stages of European integration, and the major shift that the unification of Germany represented in the recent transformation of the EU.

One can broadly agree with the analysis that Fabien Escalona makes in his overview in *Médiapart* [17]: “In the EMU, Germany enjoys a”hegemonic grip,”which it derives from its economic weight, its institutional positions and its capacity to link up with the different shades of opinion in the Eurogroup. Its intransigence is well received by the states of Northern and Eastern Europe, which share its business model or are integrated into its exporting system. Its tough positions are not disavowed by the governments that have implemented an austerity that has been contested in their own countries. And they are accepted by other countries, including France, for whom the preservation of Europe’s perimeter is an imperative that is just as much geopolitical as ideological. Angela Merkel was addressing these countries as much as her Bundestag when she declared that the euro”symbolizes [the] community of destiny” of the EU.

The Greek crisis serves to reveal what existed before it broke out: the substance of the new institutions and mechanisms built into the treaties and pacts since 2009. I share the analysis of Cédric Durand and Razmig Keucheyan on “European Caesarism” [18] that is emerging from the crisis. But it must be defined precisely. The institutions have been transformed and new mechanisms have been introduced in order to bypass certain prohibitions and weaknesses of the system (faced with market speculation) without calling into question either the free movement of capital or the autonomy of the ECB, and especially without convening a constituent assembly: such an assembly should theoretically (by virtue of the Treaties) be required for any transformation of the rules and statutes of the institutions and states.

The realization of a great “competitive Europe” is the objective. But the absence in the treaties of procedures that are based on solidarity found itself confronted by the speculative crisis. After the recourse to the IMF, ad hoc mechanisms are being introduced so that “aid” - requested by a state in crisis - can be drastically conditioned to rules close to those of the sinister “structural adjustment policies” imposed elsewhere by the IMF. The article by Fabien Escalona referred to above (“La gauche alternative face au défi du ‘diktat’ européen”), lists the various repressive legislative measures - the “Six-Pack”, the “Two-Pack”, the “fiscal pact included in the Treaty on Stability, Governance and Cooperation (TSCG)” - of which the essence is to “modify the budgetary autonomy of the parliaments”. The European “federalism” which is being consolidated and which is being welcomed by some people as “steps forward” towards “more Europe” should be contested as “illegal”, “illegitimate”and”odious”- to use the same words as we do concerning the debt.

The analogy is not accidental: should we not insist on the illegality- under the European treaties themselves, which are, however, not very democratic – of all the neocolonial procedures that are being implemented not only in Greece, but prior to that in Cyprus and elsewhere? We can draw inspiration from the audit on the Greek debt [19], and the actions of the global justice movement against the free trade treaties, or from the conferences on the climate (taking inspiration from many of the struggles evoked by Naomi Klein in her book “This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate”) in order to forge on the European level counter-powers, blockages, centres of counter-expertise at the service of contestation and alternatives.

b) Pose the question everywhere: currency (in its specific context), finance, taxation – to do what? For what rights and “common goods”?

We must make concrete what is at stake for people, against shortcuts: the currency is not “neutral” - the euro no more than the British pound or the dollar; it is not under capitalism just an intermediary for exchange. But the return to national currencies is not a way out of capitalism – and therefore from the class issues that lie behind the control of the currency and of funding. This is true of any institution in capitalism. And it is obviously particularly true for the euro. But it is, concretely, the EMU (the Economic and Monetary Union which uses the euro), including a whole series of institutions and authorities that manage it, as well as its “criteria”, which make of the euro an instrument of the ruling classes.

To contest the EU and EMU concretely implies not to “leave the euro” but to advocate another policy, other rights, other uses of the currency. Politics can be turned against the “actors” and against social needs and rights, when we pose the question: the euro - the drachma, the pound sterling... – to do what?

The question of public, social, plural control over money and funding is much more “political” and subversive than the slogan of changing the currency.

The lopsided character of the construction of a unified market space based on a single currency and virtually no budget as counterpart has been contested from the beginning. But it is not a theoretical “error”. Nor simply the result of a “capitalist” or “neoliberal” project (Britain, which is very neoliberal and capitalist, has always contested it...). It is the result of historical compromises at the crossroads of concrete economic and historical factors - where German unification has played a key role.

Here we put this debate to one side. What is essential resides in the approach and the proposals:

- Whether or not we get out of the euro, we must not give up thinking about and preparing “parallel currencies” as means of resistance, but also a broader conception of the plurality of monetary spaces: we must work on this kind of thinking and project on the European level, on the basis of a permanent collective connecting experts and social movements, and popularizing existing experiences of non-profitmaking funding of projects based on solidarity. [20]
- On this level we must integrate reflections on the international monetary system in its various periods (from the gold standard to the Bretton Woods system) and the criticisms developed by Keynes against the latter; we must further stimulate reflection and proposals for action against the powers of the IMF and on the ongoing restructuring of global power relations around alternative currencies and financing.
- In every case, at all levels, there cannot be public control of monetary policy in the context of free movement of capital: this is a central, major issue; as is the question of the prohibition of speculative

private market financing of basic needs - agriculture, but also social services, therefore public budgets. Campaigns that are deeply based and of long duration should be deployed on these issues - with popular education oriented towards action.

The various European nations must be helped to take possession of their own past and present resistance against all relations of domination – and in so doing, fully understand it and make of it a “common European good” and the crucible of the European public space.

c) The self-vindicating vocabulary of the EU often enters the discourse of those who criticize it: we must be careful never to call “Europe” the historically unprecedented construction that is the European Union, in order to criticize it in a precise fashion.

We must fight a “Europeanist” racism which designates people who are “worthy” of being “Europeans and which denigrates the others, their past, their history ... - I have tried to contribute to this work in particular on the peoples of the Balkans [21] against a dominant “Europeanist” ideology that only recognizes as “civilized” the peoples who join the Union by complying with its rules. The Greek people are suffering the full force of this type of insult.

More broadly, with the social war of massive destruction that has been waged since the beginning of the 1980s and which rebounded after 2008-09, one of the most important issues at stake on the ideological, political and repressive levels is the criminalization of past and present resistance. Thus the revolutions of the twentieth century have been reduced to the gulag and the one-party state, ignoring the social gains that came from both anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic struggles; past and present, as well as that of anti-colonialist uprisings and those against slavery which need to be fully integrated into the alternative “European public space” that we must build; we must do this in the battles for an alternative hegemony that we have to wage.

Deepening the concrete analysis of the major phases of European construction through the eyes of the different peoples affected by its successive enlargements, means going back over the different and concrete conditions that prevailed in the enlargements to the countries of the South (which were emerging from dictatorships) and then to the countries of the East. To do so is to understand what the peoples expected - and their present disillusion; but also to find ways of taking this disillusion and turning it against the EU, against its unfulfilled egalitarian, social and democratic promises. It means exposing clearly what was the product of the conditions of the Cold War between systems and what wants to put an end, definitively, to any alternative system. It means putting on the agenda another Europe in another world - against the globalized capitalist world-system.

d) Turn the guns of anger against the wealthy who divide us in order to reign on racist grounds.

We should make no mistake about the target.

The radicalization of the struggle in Greece, the deepening of the “no” in the referendum, should not be turned around to the advantage of Golden Dawn or a Greek oligarchy that has benefited, along with the German and French banks, from the European pseudo- “aid”.

We must “turn the guns” of anger, as Jean Ziegler put it [22] against those who, everywhere, benefit from the dominant social war.

Although there is a necessary fight against the neocolonial behaviour and powers of a “centre” of the EU, particularly in Germany, the “peripheries” also form part of the dominant countries: the German workers suffer from the formidable Hartz laws, which generalize job insecurity, the “one euro jobs” and reliance on outsourcing; the East Germans have suffered forced privatizations and neocolonial practices that have left lasting traces. Meanwhile, the populations of Eastern Europe have been used

for the establishment of a radical European social and fiscal dumping (for the benefit of capital) and to impose austere "discipline" for the dismantling of social services.

All these disposessions are ignored by each isolated and muzzled people, put in competition with all the others. We cannot understand and combat the weak solidarity with the Greek people or fight the "anti-Greek" racism that is spread by the ruling classes to legitimize their own policies, without squarely confronting what has happened to all European peoples - without contesting the mechanisms and the ideologies that have accompanied this social destruction on a continental scale.

This must be done with all the peoples concerned, on egalitarian bases that can be the foundation of another European project. Personally, I would happily call it "socialist". But that is not what is essential, and agreement on the words used is not a precondition for inventing together this other Europe, in another world.

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P.S.

* Translation IVP. <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>

Footnotes

[1] These terms are borrowed from the resolution adopted by the national leadership of the Portuguese Left Bloc, ESSF (article 35540),
[art35540:http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35540](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35540)

[2] Stathis Kouvelakis, ESSF (article 35537), [Grèce : « Le non n'est pas vaincu, nous continuons »:](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35537)
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35537>

[3] The contributors to this book were Verveine Angeli, Thomas Coutrot, Guillaume Etiévant, Michel Husson, Pierre Khalfa, Daniel Rallet, Jacques Rigaudiat, Catherine Samary and Aurélie Trouvé.

[4] Nicole Gohlke, Janine WISSLER, ESSF (article 35620), [Seen from Germany, lessons from Greece: Escaping the Euro Dream – The Terms of the Debate:](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35620)
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35620>

[5] Alexis Cukier, ESSF (article 35604), [Quelle stratégie pour la gauche radicale européenne ? Contribution à la réflexion collective après la défaite en Grèce:](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35604)
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35604>

[6] <http://blog.mondediplo.net/2015-07-18-La-gauche-et-l-euro-liquider-reconstruire>

[7] <http://www.regards.fr/politique/europe-en-etre-ou-pas> 7753

[8] Cédric Durand, ESSF (article 35627), [Qu'est-ce que l'Europe ? – Introduction de l'ouvrage](#)

collectif « En finir avec l'Europe »:
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35627>

[9] ESSF (article 35469), [The Greek test of strength and the urgency of a strategic debate on the left](#):
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35469>

[10] Michel Husson, "The good drachma? A modest contribution to the debate":
<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4193>

[11] Eric Toussaint, ESSF (article 35453), [Greece: Alternatives to the Capitulation - Some emergency measures](#):
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35453>

[12] <http://cadtm.org/Lettre-ouverte-a-Yanis-Varoufakis>

[13] Husson, op.cit.

[14] Perry Anderson, *The New Old World*, Verso, London and New York, 2011

[15] It would be necessary to go back over the ambiguities of 1989 and what is at stake in the new "lukewarm war" with Russia. See the articles on these subjects on <http://csamary.free.fr> - recent articles on Ukraine and on the "new world order", available also on ESSF.]).

In fact, the space of struggle and the construction of a "European political space" must be conceived within/outside/against this EU and for another Europe; and its construction should not suffer from any "stageism" or go back to a vision of sunny uplands (with in the meantime a retreat to national frameworks and simple "classic" coordination between them. The alternative European problematic should not be confined to the borders of the EU, and even less just the EMU countries - indeed, the European Forums and Counter-summits have not been reduced to the member states. This does not prevent regional or thematic groupings, specific battles and tactics which can be developed and articulated (thought out) together.

This approach must urgently be developed, on the level of trade unions and associations, on the political level, without prejudice to the overall scenario of challenging the EU and provoking a crisis of it, nor specific scenarios for each country (joining the EU or, adoption of the euro or not) which must derive programmatically from concrete conditions and tactical choices, while maintaining the same critical strategic axes.

What must unify these counter-powers and forge an alternative "hegemonic bloc" is a radical critique of the dominant policies, whether they are implemented with the British pound sterling (inside or outside of the EU), the Hungarian forint or the euro. Such an approach does not preclude anchoring resistance in its national context and systematically seeking, in however limited a way, to make it a tool to contest the EU as it is. Such an orientation does not make the choice "for or against the euro" (or the EU) a strategic choice: it is then possible to conceive of disagreements within the anti-system left, but without that preventing the search for common terrains of struggle, including the possibility of a joint campaign during a referendum: cannot we wish to see that in the UK, where supporters of "yes" and "no" within the radical left will both have excellent arguments for their choice and will rub shoulders with appalling adversaries on the right... who share their option. Why not campaign on the common criticism of the EU and of all xenophobic nationalists, in defence of fundamental rights for the whole of Europe, letting their voters choose between tactical options, for which the pros and cons would be honestly presented.

(Can one dream?).

Can we advance the (naïve?) idea that we are confronted with several mortal dangers: the possible “Pasokisation” of all the Europeanist lefts, or an enlarged “Grexit” imposed by the creditors and the Eurogroup - and facilitated by the appearance of it being a voluntary choice. As for the rise of racism and xenophobia (particularly the theses of “Eurabia” or the “invasion” of Europe by Islam), it is present to varying degrees in all the scenarios: the Europeanism of Valls and Sarkozy is scarcely less xenophobic than that of Le Pen; and the retreat into nationalism (not to be confused with the defence of national rights) is as dramatic as European integration on the backs of the peoples.

Marine Le Pen’s success is due less to her anti-European discourse than to xenophobia - and in particular the denunciation of the invasion of France by Islam, which supposedly threatens secularism, women, Jews and homosexuals (which has helped to reconfigure the Lepenist “software” on the terrain of the left). But we must certainly not leave to the far right the national question (democratic self-determination and popular sovereignty) and the fight against the neocolonialist practices that are internal to the EU.

Whether we are talking about antiracist struggles and the battle against all forms of oppression, or the defence of national rights, their coherence would be much broader and more effective (against all the many and varied forms of hypocritical instrumentalization) at the European level within/against the EU than they would be in isolation. They could take a general and principled sense (rights defended everywhere, for all the peoples) and at the same time be concrete: what Union, with what equality of status and real rights?

While we are on this subject, and in homage to our late, and greatly missed comrade and friend François Vercammen, let us quote from one of his last articles, written in 1999, before a long illness [[François Vercammen, ESSF (article 35220), [Face aux institutions de l’Union européenne - Éléments sur les aspects institutionnels-étatiques de l’UE](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35220):
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35220>

[16] Some ideas for discussion were already proposed in a contribution written in 2003 (and re-published in 2012) by Antoine Artous, Dominique Mezzi and myself, “Peser sur l’émergence d’une autre Europe”:
<http://www.contretemps.eu/interventions/peser-sur-l%C3%A9mergence-dune-autre-europe>

[17] “La gauche alternative au défi du ‘diktat’ européen”

[18] Cédric Durand, Razmig Keucheyan, ESSF (article 34276), [Vers un césarisme européen - La suspension de la démocratie à la faveur de la crise](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article34276):
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article34276>

[19] see the site of CADTM www.cadtm.org

[20] See in particular on this subject Thomas Coutrot and Bruno Théret:
http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2015/03/15/l-euro-drachma-ball-and-oxygen-for-grece_1221089

[21] Catherine Samary, ESSF (article 26850), [Le Forum social des Balkans, une chance pour l’Autre Europe](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article26850):
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article26850>

[22] <http://www.politis.fr/Jean-Ziegler-choisit-son-camp,28612.html>