

# Greece, after the elections : Syriza's Pyrrhic victory, and the future of the left

Monday 28 September 2015, by [FIDLER Richard](#) (Date first published: 25 September 2015).

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In the wake of the September 20 Greek election SYRIZA has once again formed a coalition government with a small right-wing party, ANEL. [1] Both parties lost votes and seats but their standing, like those of most other parties, was not very dissimilar to the results in January, when SYRIZA was first elected.

SYRIZA's 35.46% and ANEL's 3.69%, combined, were sufficient to give them a majority of 155 seats in the 300-seat parliament under Greece's electoral law, which gives 50 additional seats to the party with a plurality, in this case (as before) SYRIZA. However, voter turnout was at an all-time low, 44% of the electorate abstaining although voting is mandatory in Greece. This means that SYRIZA was supported by only 20% of eligible voters. [2]

And this is a very different party, and government, than the one elected in January.

SYRIZA received the highest vote of any party in January on the basis of its promise to end the brutal austerity Greece has suffered in recent years at the hands of its creditors — the other countries that use the euro, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), referred to collectively as the "Troika." But this time neither SYRIZA nor ANEL could credibly promise opposition to austerity. They are committed to enforcing the harsh austerity terms imposed on Greece in July when Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras capitulated to the Troika only days following a national referendum in which 61% of the voters had strongly affirmed their opposition to austerity.

Moreover, SYRIZA will now govern without its left wing, which opposed submission to the new memorandum. The SYRIZA dissidents, previously grouped as the party's Left Platform, joined recently with a number of small anti-austerity parties to found Popular Unity, a self-described "social and political front to overturn the memoranda, predatory austerity, the negation of democracy, and the transformation of Greece into a European colony by means of indebtedness." However, Popular Unity, with only 2.86% of the popular vote, fell short of the 3% required for representation in parliament.

## **Troika the big winner**

Yanis Varoufakis, the finance minister in the previous SYRIZA government, accurately described the election result [3]:

*"The greatest winner is the troika itself. During the past five years, troika-authored bills made it through parliament on ultra-slim majorities, giving their authors sleepless nights. Now, the bills necessary to prop up the third bailout will pass with comfortable majorities, as SYRIZA is committed to them. Almost every opposition MP (with the exception of the communists of KKE and the Nazis of Golden Dawn) is also on board.*

Of course, to get to this point Greek democracy has had to be deeply wounded (1.6 million Greeks who voted in the July referendum did not bother to turn up at the polling stations on Sunday) — no great loss to bureaucrats in Brussels, Frankfurt and Washington DC for whom democracy appears, in any case, to be a nuisance.

Tsipras must now implement a fiscal consolidation and reform programme that was designed to fail. Illiquid small businesses, with no access to capital markets, have to now pre-pay next year's tax on their projected 2016 profits. Households will need to fork out outrageous property taxes on non-performing apartments and shops, which they can't even sell. VAT rate hikes will boost VAT evasion. Week in week out, the troika will be demanding more recessionary, antisocial policies: pension cuts, lower child benefits, more foreclosures.

The prime minister's plan for weathering this storm is founded on three pledges. First the agreement with the troika is unfinished business, leaving room for further negotiation of important details; second, debt relief will follow soon; and third, Greece's oligarchs will be tackled. Voters supported Tsipras because he appeared the most likely candidate to deliver on these promises. The trouble is, his capacity to do so is severely circumscribed by the agreement he has already signed.

His power to negotiate is negligible given the agreement's clear condition that the Greek government must "agree with the [troika] on all actions relevant for the achievement of the objectives of the memorandum of understanding" [4] (Notice the absence of any commitment by the troika to agree with the Greek government.)"

It was the third promise — to fight the oligarchs who got Greece into this mess in the first place — that was key to Tsipras's re-election, says Varoufakis.

*"Having accepted a new extend-and-pretend loan that limits the government's capacity to reduce austerity and look after the weak, the surviving raison d'être of a leftwing administration is to tackle noxious vested interests. However, the troika is the oligarchs' best friend, and vice versa. During the first six months of 2015, when we were challenging the troika's monopoly over policy-making powers in Greece, its greatest domestic supporters were the oligarch-owned media and their political agents. The same people and interests who have now embraced Tsipras. Can he turn against them? I think he wants to, but the troika has already disabled his main weapons (for example by forcing the disbandment of the economic crime fighting unit, SDOE). [5]"*

## **Tsipras's election maneuver**

The September election was a consequence of fundamentally undemocratic maneuvers by Tsipras designed (in the words of the DEA, a Popular Unity component) [6] to "confirm the balance of political forces and reestablish the viability of the SYRIZA-led government before workers and

popular classes realize through their own bitter experience the actual content of the agreement that was signed with the creditors on July 13.” [7] A second objective was “the purging of the left wing of his party, even if the price that he had to pay for that was the organizational disintegration of SYRIZA.”

Tsipras was supported fully in this by the vast majority of the mass media in Greece, “which played a decisive role in organizing and promoting a pre-electoral public discussion where there was almost complete silence on the issue of the new Memorandum — which is the main issue of the political struggle!” The media

"slandered the Left Platform ruthlessly, while hiding the extent of the wave of resignations and withdrawals of a huge number of activists who had built SYRIZA all those years — among them, the secretary of the party, half of the elected members of the Political Secretariat, a big part of the members of the Central Committee, and leading cadre from lots of local and working-place branches.

"The main precondition for the success of the SYRIZA leadership's strategy," says the DEA in its post-election analysis, "was the spreading disappointment and weariness among the people who were active in the social movements, including SYRIZA's base of political support.

*"That was the point and the goal of the "There Was No Alternative" argument to justify the new Memorandum. This message was repeated constantly, like a mantra, by leading members of SYRIZA, along with the five-party coalition — including SYRIZA, New Democracy, PASOK, the Independent Greeks and Potami — that was built in parliament around the consensus to ratify the new shameful Memorandum....*

A large part of the population, seeing that the anti-austerity project of SYRIZA was collapsing, started to believe that the overthrow of the Memorandum is impossible. It has started to accept that trying to implement Memorandum policies "with a human face" is the only realistic alternative.

It was this retreat, along with the recent memory of the ferocity of the politics of New Democracy and PASOK while in control of the government, that produced the political and electoral victory of Alexis Tsipras on September 20."

The events since mid-July mark "a change in the political mood and — at least temporarily — in mass consciousness," says the DEA.

*"Facing this prospect, our only possible response is the struggle from below: Strikes, demonstrations, occupations and more to defend workers' rights and social rights. In order to crack the image of the SYRIZA government's popular legitimacy created by the electoral result on September 20, these struggles must be decisively supported by activists of the left.*

Recent experience shows us that in order for such struggles to prevail, they will need a political expression. They must coalesce around a political current that aims to organize a challenge to austerity. In this, the section of the left that resisted and stood against the maneuvers of Tsipras has very special tasks."

## **Popular Unity**

In these difficult conditions, Popular Unity was founded in August to attempt to carry forward the best traditions of SYRIZA, the acronym for the original Coalition of the Radical Left. Popular Unity

encompasses some 15 organizations ranging from left social democrats and social movement activists to far-left currents. They are described in the introduction to the Jacobin translation of the Popular Unity election platform [8].

The PU platform, while adopted hastily for the snap election, illustrated the broad agreement among these forces on the “prerequisites for a radical alternative solution to the disaster of the memoranda.”

*“The basic features of the alternative route,” it said, “have already been mapped out by numerous leftist groupings, radical movements, and progressive scholars. The alternative solution we embrace seeks to provide answers to all the key problems of the economy, society, the state, and foreign policy. Naturally it is not confined to monetary policy, as is asserted [9] by the swindlers and slanderers who speak of a “drachma lobby.”*

And the platform modestly added:

*“The problem with this alternative proposal is not its supposedly inadequate “technical” elaboration but its inadequate political preparation: namely, the fact that it has not been discussed as much as it should have been among the people and the social organizations — among those, in other words, who will be called upon to put up a tough struggle against colossal vested interests in order to implement it. We plan to fill this gap immediately, through a great campaign of public dialogue....”*

The platform goes on to propose a series of “immediate emergency measures”: abolition of the memoranda “and the accompanying loan agreements that mortgage our future”; suspension of debt repayments, “with a view to effecting an overall annulment of the debt, at least the greater part of it”; an “immediate end to austerity and implementation of a policy of redistribution of social wealth to the benefit of working people and at the expense of the oligarchs”; “support for wages and pensions, and social expenditures for free public education, popular health care, and culture”; nationalization of the banks and their operation under a regime of social control,” etc.

In addition, “radical reforms will be promoted to change the bankrupt developmental model and overturn the balance of social forces to the advantage of the people and to the detriment of the oligarchs of crony capitalism.” These include radical changes in labour legislation; establishment of “a permanent, socially just, and redistributive taxation system”; an end to “predatory privatizations”; restoration of the national health system and public hospitals; a new emphasis on industrial and agricultural production based on “democratic central and regional planning, with participation and joint decision-making from local communities and a distinct environmental dimension”; strengthening of the social economy (cooperatives, self-managing enterprises that have been abandoned by their owners, solidarity networks, etc.); and “a policy of solidarity and humanism for refugees and economic immigrants.”

The platform acknowledges that “cancellation of the memoranda in itself — and even more so the radical structural changes we have described — will face fierce resistance from the dominant forces in the EU.”

*“They will immediately try to throttle our effort, using as their basic instrument the cutting off of liquidity to the banks by the ECB. We have already experienced this in the last six months, even with the much more moderate policies of the Syriza-ANEL government.*

Therefore, the question of an exit from the eurozone and of a break with the neoliberal policies and choices of the EU... will be placed on the agenda not as the product of some ideological obsession but in terms of basic political realism.”

The establishment of a national currency, the platform explains, is not an end in itself. “It is one of the necessary instruments for the implementation of the radical changes we have outlined, for which, indeed, the ultimate guarantor will be not the currency but the struggle of the popular classes.”

*“Whatever the inevitable difficulties of the first months, nothing justifies the stance of those Cassandras who equate such a move with economic disaster and national ruin. In the course of the twentieth century, sixty-nine monetary unions collapsed on this planet without this signifying the end of the world. The introduction of a national currency as a prerequisite for implementation of a progressive program for reconstruction and a way forward is not only a viable option; it is an option of hope, with the potential to launch the country on a new developmental trajectory.”*

Popular Unity orients toward

*“a new independent multi-dimensional international relations policy, in the domains of energy, economics, and politics. International relations that will not be imprisoned in the straitjacket of the EU. We aspire to an energy policy of collaboration in the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and the Middle East. A policy that will take advantage of the new opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration with the emerging economies of the BRICS nations, Latin America, and other regions of the planet.”*

*“We are against the new “Cold War” and a new division of Europe with the erection of new walls against Russia. We oppose the imperialistic options and the military adventurism of NATO. We are pledged to the exit of Greece from this coalition, a war machine that disintegrates states, tyrannizes peoples, and destabilizes the wider geopolitical arc of our region from eastern Ukraine to the Middle East. We campaign for the removal of the American-NATO bases, for non-participation of Greece in any imperialist organization.”*

The platform also calls for termination of military collaboration with Israel, immediate recognition of Palestine, and opposition to the EU’s Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) “now being hatched.”

And it calls for radical transformation of the state, the judiciary and public administration, including disbandment of Greece’s notorious “riot police” (many of whom are Golden Dawn members or supporters).

*“We will moreover launch wide-ranging social consultation for in-depth revision of the Constitution and the political system by a new constituent assembly to emerge from subsequent elections. A central objective of this new revision will be establishment of a new, much more advanced democracy, conjoining representative with direct democracy, with provision of a significant margin for popular initiative and self-activation, popular participation and direct popular decisions, on the basis of the international best practices and experience.”*

### **Not a finished product**

This was a strong platform, addressed to meeting the key challenges in the period ahead. But Popular Unity is not a finished project, says DEA leader Panos Petrou [10]

The main objective at the moment for Popular Unity is to avoid the Italian scenario — that is to say, to avoid what happened to the Italian left after the collapse of the Romano Prodi center-left government and the subsequent collapse of the Party of Communist Refoundation that supported

Prodi (PRC by its initials in Italian). PRC support for Prodi led to a fragmentation on the left, which continues to this day. Those who continue on in very small groups are trying to rebuild.

*"We are trying to create, as we put it, a refuge for all left-wing activists betrayed by SYRIZA who want to keep up the fight that SYRIZA began. Our main objective is to keep the flame of resistance alive, especially for those who voted "no" in the referendum and are now faced with a new Memorandum.*

We need a left voice to speak against this new Memorandum, just as we spoke up against the old ones. We need the left to continue this fight — a fight which was cut short by the SYRIZA leadership."

In its post-election analysis [11], the DEA leadership drew attention to what it termed "important subjective, political mistakes" in the Popular Unity campaign.

*"Faced with the pressure from our political opponents, who argued that obedience to the European leadership is obligatory, we overemphasized support for an exit from the eurozone. At some point, this necessary part of our overall argument was singled out and raised above a more general program of organizing a united class movement against austerity and an anti-capitalist program towards socialist emancipation. That was a gift to Tsipras and the mass media, who looked for every opportunity to slander us as 'drachma left.'"*

Overall, however, the analysis was positive:

*"Despite all this, Popular Unity received 152,000 voters, and it has already rallied an organized layer of thousands of activists and experienced veterans of the working-class movement and the left. This gives us the strength, despite losing the first battle, to engage in the war that is coming.*

Of course, for this to happen, we need to resolve, in an effective and democratic way, all the organizational, political and programmatic questions about Popular Unity that were naturally left aside during the brief period before the elections."

## **The sectarian left**

The one left party that outpolled Popular Unity in this election was the Communist Party, known as KKE in its Greek acronym. Historically, it was the pro-Moscow CP that remained after a Eurocommunist faction broke to form Synaspismos, later a founding component of Syriza. (The Eurocommunist current, which developed in several southern European countries, generally held out the perspective of "democratizing the apparatus of the capitalist state, transforming it into a valid tool for constructing a socialist society without needing to destroy it radically by force." [12])

The KKE vote increased marginally, from 5.47% in January to 5.59% this time. "But the fact that this happened in a situation where SYRIZA was in crisis and split, and after Tsipras had just signed a new Memorandum of harsh austerity, shows that there is no cause for celebration," says the DEA. "The politics of the leadership of the KKE failed to capitalize a rare opportunity.

*"During the pre-election period, the KKE aimed its attacks almost exclusively against Popular Unity, in the hopes of claiming all votes of left-wing opposition to SYRIZA for itself. This tactic leaves all the promises on the front page of the party's newspaper about initiatives to form some sort of popular alliance in doubt."*



As for the smaller anticapitalist alliance ANTARSYA, its vote likewise increased marginally, from 0.64% in January to 0.85% this time.

*"In its statement after the elections, the New Left Current (NAR), one of the main components of ANTARSYA, set as its goal "a broad militant front to overthrow the coming storm of anti-worker measures...the commitment to joint action from all the parts of the militant left, including the Communist Party and Popular Unity."*

The problem is that this statement was issued a day after the election and not three weeks before it. In the electoral battle of September 2015, the "forces of the militant left" failed to provide a common response, which was necessary."

Had ANTARSYA overcome its refusal to join the Popular Unity (echoing its earlier sectarian refusal to join the old SYRIZA as a recognized platform), it is conceivable that Popular Unity could have won enough votes to be represented in parliament. Some currents within ANTARSYA did in fact join Popular Unity.

### **The witch-hunt against Zoe Konstantopoulou**

Among those "activists and experienced veterans of the working-class movement and the left" who joined Popular Unity, reports Panos Petrou, were well-known public figures, such as Zoe Konstantopoulou, a Syriza deputy "who served as president [speaker] of the parliament... before she resigned in protest of the new Memorandum, and Manolis Glézos, the 93-year-old Greek resistance fighter."

Zoe Konstantopoulou was in my own opinion the authentic heroine of the first six months of the Syriza government. Among her progressive initiatives, she got the parliament to establish the Truth Committee on Public Debt, coordinated by Eric Toussaint, president of the Belgian-based Committee for the Abolition of the Third World Debt. Its preliminary audit, as I reported in my earlier article, provided documentary proof that most of Greece's foreign debt claimed by the EU and IMF creditors should be considered illegitimate, illegal and odious, and its repayment unsustainable. It urged the adoption of a series of measures that could have been taken in response to the financial blackmail of the Troika, but were rejected by the Tsipras leadership.

When Tsipras moved to force the new Memorandum terms through parliament without even the minimal debate required, Konstantopoulou was one of the strongest voices in opposition and in defense of the institution's own democratic procedures and the sovereignty of Greece. [13] Since then, she has continued to fight austerity and the Troika's violation of Greece's sovereignty, both in Greece and abroad. [14]

This has earned her the hatred of the mainstream media in Greece, described with appalling examples by Sonia Mitralias: See "In Greece, sexist rampage against resistance to memoranda - The case of the former President of the Greek Parliament and the new witch hunt." Writes Mitralias :

*"From the moment Zoe K. stepped up to become an important figure of the opposition to the Memoranda that have ruined Greece, she was denigrated, vilified, humiliated, slandered ... in short, demonized by those that are on the Troika bandwagon. The attacks against her are so persistent, organized, coordinated and systematic that they can only be perceived as a real strategy of warfare aimed at her political elimination from the public arena."*

It would be wrong to attribute this "extremely sexist phenomenon" to phallocratic or random

individual behavior or anachronistic mentalities, as is claimed by the feminist politics section of the (old) Syriza in a statement entitled "The sexist attacks against Konstantopoulou are anachronistic stereotypes". This is a modern-day witch hunt!" [15].

And it is a foretaste of the campaign that will be waged with increasing ferocity in the media and in legislative repression against all movements fighting the implementation of the new austerity under the current Memorandum.

### **A provisional balance sheet**

Addressing a conference in Switzerland in mid-September, Popular Unity (and DEA) leader Panos Petrou summarized the experience to date in building a radical left alternative to capitalist austerity in Greece in the following words [16]:

*"Despite its bitter ending, the existence of SYRIZA itself was a victory for Europe and the Greek working class. It was this that opened the door to important advances in the Greek class struggle, of which the most important was the historic July 5 referendum — with the great victory for the "no" vote of 61 percent, despite all the blackmail and threats. That was a tremendous political moment in Greek history, and it would not have been possible without SYRIZA's victory on January 25.*

The pain suffered during these seven months of government have also raised the political consciousness of a large part of the Greek working class in terms of how to fight for the end of austerity and against the limits of the eurozone. This rise in consciousness could not have been brought about without the years of revolutionary propaganda on the part of various groups. But then, it might not have happened with just the years of revolutionary propaganda alone — without the living experience of these seven months.

This bitter ending was not predetermined. It was not a given. Things might have gone in another direction, and there were many other alternatives to the official line. We did not have the strength to impose a different course on the government. A different course depended on forces much broader than DEA and other left-wing currents — it required broader social forces from within the working-class movement. That is how we must evaluate the past months' course in order to try to change the future course."

And it required massive solidarity from the European left as a whole, a solidarity that was sadly lacking.

### **International solidarity**

In a recent article, [17] Leo Panitch argues that the current crisis of world capitalism

*"has fully exposed how far the world's states are enveloped not just in the American state's internal contradictions but even more so in global capitalism's deeper irrationalities. And it has also shown that the salient conflicts in the world today are class conflicts within states, including the American ones, rather than conflicts between them."*

In my opinion, the Greek events point us to a necessary caveat to the second sentence I have quoted. Panitch is correct to exclude the likelihood of national struggles by capitalist ruling classes comparable to the inter-imperialist conflicts of early 20<sup>th</sup> century imperialism; as he says, the rapid emergence of some of the largest countries of the formerly underdeveloped third world (such as



China) “requires that their states [i.e. their national bourgeoisies] play a more active role in the management of global capitalism.”

But on the other side of the ledger, the radical left forces that develop within the individual capitalist countries — especially those that manage to form the government — are confronted not only with their national bourgeoisies but — as Greece’s recent experience shows so clearly — with the enormous economic, financial and political clout of the imperialist institutions that are so integral to the structures and management of global capitalism.

As a consequence, the class struggle within a country like Greece is not purely economic, and directed solely or even primarily against its ruling class (most of the working-class struggles Panitch cites are economic — strikes and labour mobilizations from China and India to the United States, struggles within these states), but also national, in defense of state sovereignty and thus profoundly international in content, dependent for their success on the active solidarity of working-class and progressive forces in other countries; in Greece’s case, starting within the European Union. This is a defining feature of anti-capitalist resistance in contemporary imperialism, as the Memorandum’s neocolonial trusteeship over Greece so egregiously illustrates.

### **Some sage advice and solidarity from Bolivia**

Speaking in Athens in June, shortly before the referendum on the Troika’s draconian terms, Bolivian vice-president Álvaro García Linera eloquently addressed this problematic. [\[18\]](#)

“There is an adverse correlation of continental forces, you are alone today,” he told his audience. In Latin America in the 1980s, we were confronted with demands by the IMF and World Bank to pay external debts amounting in some cases to more than the annual GDP. But unlike you Greeks, we had multiple creditors and we were able to divide them, settling with some but not others. The major debtor countries were able to form a bloc strong enough to renegotiate our payments to the international agencies, often on terms as favourable as 10 cents on the dollar. Unfortunately, the countries with similar debt problems in Europe, such as Spain, Portugal, Italy or Ireland, have refused to support your effort.

But it is precisely in such difficult conditions, said García Linera, that the left can demonstrate its capacity to lead. Had they not managed to cope with an imperialist world war, famine, and similar problems, “Lenin and the Bolsheviks would have continued to be a group of semi-clandestine activists.”

“When everything is going well a left is not needed; when things go very badly, the left is needed and if we are not prepared to lead when things are going badly we are not leftists.”

Secondly, he said, all EU countries have lost their capacity to control their economy over the last 15 years. They have mortgaged Europe to a cloud called the European Union which is “basically a coalition of bankers and some firms that define the fate of the Europeans, and that is very sad.” He contrasted this with the situation of Bolivia, “where we are able to ourselves define the exchange rates, the monetary mass, to force banks to lend money to the state,” etc. But you can’t, because everything is under the control of the European Bank.

Thirdly, “the Troika want to destroy you, don’t have illusions that the Troika is acting in good faith, or that it is flexible.” They want to foreclose you as a good example for other countries. So you get “exemplary punishment.”

Acknowledging that the Greek people seemed to be showing signs of fatigue with the incessant stalemate in the negotiations with the Troika ("People have to work, look after their homes, attend to personal matters"), the Bolivian vice-president reminded his audience that the left, as Marx said, had to know how to measure the varying tempos of social mobilization, both collective action and retreat. This puts a premium on direct contact of the government and its leaders with society through the media, meetings with the unions, and with the various social movements. "A revolutionary government of the left must always ensure that its decisions are based on informed consultation and discussion with the people."

In conclusion, he said, "I do not know how it can be done, but it is essential that the Greek government, the Greek people, have the minimal economic power to make decisions... a capacity for economic management, economic resources that allow you to gain more time, to adopt measures of a social character that benefit people, to resolve this or that problem independently of what the banks and the Troika do."

And lastly, you need solidarity. "Europe must wake up." In Latin America we are watching closely, and "we place our hopes of a rebirth of Europe in you, not the banks; in the Europe of the peoples, not the Europe of the Troika...."

"People have to understand that Greece cannot be left alone. Greece cannot approach these negotiations as a purely administrative matter; it is a political question, a social question. Time is running against us, it is in favour of the Troika."

## **European responses**

European left responses to the Greek events have varied widely. Gregor Gizi, outgoing president of the German left party Die Linke, has supported Alexis Tsipras and attacked Popular Unity. Similarly, Pablo Iglesias, the leader of Spain's Podemos, gave full support to Syriza, even speaking at its closing election rally.

However, these parties are divided. The Die Linke section in Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state, has sharply criticized the Greek government's decision to sign on to the Memorandum and has characterized Popular Unity as the "best expression of the NO of the Greek people." Sarah Vagkenknecht, who is expected to become co-chair of Die Linke, has called on the new Greek government not to apply the Memorandum. [19]

Moreover, Oskar Lafontaine, the historic founder of Die Linke, has co-signed a statement calling for "A Plan B in Europe" with Jean-Luc Mélenchon, co-founder of France's Parti de Gauche, Stefano Fassina of Italy, and Zoe Konstantopoulou and Yanis Varoufakis of Greece. The statement, issued September 11, declares in part [20]:

*"We live in extraordinary times. We are facing an emergency. Member-states need to have policy space that allows their democracies to breathe and to put forward sensible policies at the member-state's level, free of fear of a clamp down from an authoritarian Eurogroup dominated by the interests of the strongest among them and of big business, or from an ECB that is used as a steamroller that threatens to flatten an "uncooperative country", as it happened with Cyprus or Greece."*

Most European governments, it says, "representing Europe's oligarchy, and hiding behind Berlin and Frankfurt," had a plan A: Not to yield to the European people's demand for democracy and to use brutality to end their resistance.... and a plan B: To eject Greece from the Eurozone in the worst

conditions possible by destroying its banking system and putting to death its economy.

"Facing this blackmail, we also need a plan B of our own."

*"Our Plan A for a democratic Europe, backed with a Plan B which shows the powers-that-be that they cannot terrorise us into submission, is inclusive and aims at appealing to the majority of Europeans. This demands a high level of preparation. Debate will strengthen its technical elements. Many ideas are already on the table: the introduction of parallel payment systems, parallel currencies, digitization of euro transactions, community based exchange systems, the euro exit and transformation of the euro into a common currency.*

No European nation can work towards its liberation in isolation. Our vision is internationalist. In anticipation of what may happen in Spain, Ireland – and potentially again in Greece, depending on how the political situation evolves – and in France in 2017, we need to work together concretely towards a plan B, taking into account the different characteristics of each country.

We therefore propose the convening of an international summit on a plan B for Europe, open to willing citizens, organisations and intellectuals. This conference could take place as early as November 2015."

An earlier joint statement, issued September 5, calls for an "Austerexit," an exit from austerity, referencing the threat of a Greek exit from the eurozone. It is signed by Olivier Besançon of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste in France; Antonis Davanellos, a leader of Popular Unity in Greece, and Miguel Urbán Crespo, a Podemos member of the European Parliament [\[21\]](#).

From this point forward, we know just how antithetical membership in the euro currency system is with a policy of emancipation in the Greek case.

*"For us, what is most critical is to end the policy of austerity, be it within the framework of the euro if the situation permits it, or outside it, if the people cannot achieve their aspirations. We do not confuse the means with the ends — we are not partisans of this or that currency because the real question before us is to know who controls the monetary system. Whether the credit system is based on a national or European currency does not change much as long as either of these remain under the influence of the traditional groups of the financial speculators who make up their own banking laws.*

The signers likewise call for "the organization of a great European-wide conference of social and political resistance in the coming weeks... to debate the meaning we can give to this campaign for an 'Austerexit'."

It is to be hoped that the various leading activists of the European left can coordinate their efforts and reach agreement on common action in defense of Greece and for a far-reaching debate on a new approach to the European Union that points the way to "a new Europe" free of domination by capital.

**Richard Fidler**

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**P.S.**

\* "SYRIZA's Pyrrhic victory, and the future of the left in Greece". Posted at Friday, September 25, 2015:

<http://lifeonleft.blogspot.ca/2015/09/syrizas-pyrrhic-victory-and-future-of.html>

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## Footnotes

[1] SYRIZA is the acronym of the Coalition of the Radical Left, a reference to the combination of parties that founded it in 2004. ANEL stands for Independent Greeks-National Patriotic Alliance.

[2] See "Greek legislative election, September 2015.":

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_legislative\\_election,\\_September\\_2015](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_legislative_election,_September_2015)

[3] <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/21/alexis-tsipras-greece-greek-leader-tr-oika-yanis-varoufakis>

[4] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/12/memorandum-understanding-what-exactly-has-greece-signed-up-for>

[5] See also "Eurozone's enforcer ready to keep Greece's new leader in line.":

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/18/eurozone-greek-prime-minister-maarten-verway-greece-bailout>

[6] The International Workers Left (DEA, by its initials in Greek) was a main voice in the Left Platform within SYRIZA.

[7] The earlier history is described in my article, available on ESSF (article 35621), [Lessons from Greece: Was, and Is There, an Alternative? The Left confronts Greece's financial crisis](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35621) : <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35621>

[8] See on ESSF (article 35945), [Greece: What Does Popular Unity Stand For? - Its platform](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35945).

[9] <http://www.ekathimerini.com/159834/article/ekathimerini/comment/drachma-lobby-needs-to-go>

[10] ESSF (article 35894), [Keeping the flame of resistance lit in Greece - The coming elections are taking place at a critical turning point](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35894): <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35894>.

[11] ESSF (article 35913), [Greece: Tsipras' Pyrrhic victory and the struggle ahead](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35913): <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35913>

[12] Spanish CP leader Santiago Carrillo in his book Eurocommunism and the State (1977). Quoted by Alan Thornett. See on ESSF (article 35905), ["Greece & Europe: The capitulation of Tsipras leadership and the role of 'left europeanism'"](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35905): <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35905>.

[13] See on ESSF (article 35533), ["Speaker of the Greek Parliament's Speech: The complete subordination of a democratic country to the will and demands of other governments is not an](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35533)

[agreement](#),”:

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35533>.

[14] See on ESSF (article 3595), [North Korea: Ending Food Aid Would Deepen Hunger](#):

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35955>

[15] See also on ESSF (article 35890), [Greece: Violence against women, a strategic weapon in the hands of the rulers in a time of class war](#)”:

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35890>

[16] ESSF (article 35894), [ar 35894](#):

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35894>

[17] “Rethinking Marxism and Imperialism for the Twenty-first Century,” 23 New Labor Forum 2, 2014, pp. 22-28.

[18] See “En Grecia se está definiendo la historia y el futuro de Europa,” Cambio, 21 June 2015, Discurso presidencial, pp. 24-32:

<http://www.comunicacion.gob.bo/sites/default/files/media/discursos/Discurso%20Presidencial%2021-06-15.pdf>

[19] See SARAH VAGKENKNECHT: “I find it hard to congratulate SYRIZA.”

[http://iskra.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=22206:sara-syriza-koybelakhs&catid=37:di-evropi&Itemid=172](http://iskra.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22206:sara-syriza-koybelakhs&catid=37:di-evropi&Itemid=172)

[20] <http://www.jean-luc-melenchon.fr/2015/09/11/a-plan-b-in-europe/>

[21] See on ESSF (article 35892), [“Austerexit.” – Time for an exit from austerity – For the organization of a great European-wide conference of social and political resistance](#):

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article35892>