

Main points of Alexis Tsipras speech at the Conference *Alliance against austerity – for democracy in Europe*

It is a great pleasure for me to be amidst comrades and friends, persons that have been marching together for many years now in a common struggle against inequalities, social injustice, austerity, in a common struggle for a Europe of democracy and social solidarity.

We are in a conjuncture where values and ideas of the left in Europe will either regain hegemony or fear and the forces of hatred will prevail.

Values and ideas of the left: solidarity, equality, justice, democracy, world peace.

The extreme poverty, the large inequalities prepare a fertile ground to grow next to the neoliberal hegemony a new much worse and more threatening hegemony: that of the ideology of fear and hatred.

We have to ask ourselves: What is it that drives popular masses to the ideology of hatred against any difference?

The answer is fear. Fear is what drives mass popular strata to the far right.

Who has fed and cultivated that fear?

The surrender of world political leadership to the markets and the absolute domination of neoliberal models in the field of economy. This domination is what creates conditions of large social inequalities, conditions of insecurity and fear to wide popular strata.

The agent that empowers the far-right and anti-Europeanism in Europe is austerity itself.

We have to realize that it is our duty, a duty in the face of history, the duty of leftist and progressive forces to struggle to regain the hegemony of left's ideas in Europe:

To fight against austerity and neoliberalism, to fight for the defense of democracy and social rights.

Europe faces a triple crisis: economic, refugee and, a security crisis related to the rise of religious fanaticism and the spread of extreme fundamentalism combined with foreign interventions in the Middle East.

This crisis becomes structural and existential. The dominant powers of Europe deal with it not according to rational thinking but with reflexes that reveal a nervous breakdown and moral panic. A Europe of 500 million people cannot integrate one or two million refugees?

I think has now become clear that the way that the EU deals with the economic and refugee crisis will define not only its form and its political orientation, as we kept saying until today, but its viability as a collective endeavor.

It is exactly this neoliberal Europe of austerity and insecurity, of mass unemployment, poverty and inequalities, a Europe divided between north and south, center and periphery that became the ground for the far-right and Euroscepticism to grow.

Allow me a personal tone, having the experience of both the economic and refugee crisis at European level. One thing is certain: Europe cannot continue like this.

It has to change direction.

It cannot keep its borders open to austerity but closed to people running from a war and searching for hope and rescue.

It is a fundamental contradiction that weakens the moral foundation of European integration.

Now it's the time of great democratic, historic choices.

Europe will either reestablish itself on the basis of its founding principles – the principles of humanism, democracy, solidarity, social justice and coherence, but also of political equality of EU member-states, or Europe will not stay united for long.

Either with shared policies of fiscal solidarity and redistribution, but also with policies that create a social Europe, we'll make disappear its multiple internal, class and political divisions or we'll be responsible for its degeneration as a collective endeavor.

Europe has to dissociate itself from the neoliberal view of competitiveness through a constant deregulation of workers' rights and environmental standards.

What Europe needs today is to focus on the notion of productivity: Not becoming better than our neighbor but *all of us* becoming better, we and our neighbors.

We need a common European budget.

We need a shared investment fund for social infrastructure, research, innovation, cutting edge technologies.

We need a new social contract. A new contract of solidarity for growth, redistribution and social cohesion. This is I believe a goal that attracts a wider array of forces.

The new Greek government in 2015 negotiated with courage a reform of a tough program of fiscal adjustment.

It confronted head on the political logic of austerity.

But it faced the continuous blackmail of its creditors that imposed a unique liquidity asphyxiation and in the end even capital controls.

The government of the Left in Greece made cracks in the wall of neoliberalism in Europe.

It threw a seed, that we believe will bear fruit.

In Portugal already we have a progressive government, with the support of the left that is also the target of neoliberal forces that are not happy with its presence.

In Spain we also hope to have a progressive development.

In Ireland, after the elections, Sinn Féin will shape political developments in equal terms with other parties.

In Britain too there is a turn of the Labor Party to the left, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn.

The balance of power in Europe is an ongoing struggle.

And the struggle for social change continues.