



**7th Summer University  
of the European Left Party (EL) and *transform!europe*,  
Portaria, Greece,  
17 - 22 July 2012**

## **Documentation**

by *transform!europe*

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[www.european-left.org](http://www.european-left.org)  
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## Introduction

More than 400 participants have been at the 7th Summer University of the European Left Party (EL) and *transform!europe*, which took place in Portaria, near the city of Volos, in the region of Thessaly in Greece, from 17 to 22 July.

In the epicentre of the crisis, this Summer University has had the crisis as its transversal theme. The effects of the austerity measures all over Europe, the pauperisation of society, but also the big popular resistance and important mobilisations in several countries, outline what is in the page the European people are turning at this new moment in history. The slogan of the summer university has been:

### “Peoples of Europe, Unite!”

In cooperation with the Greek EL member parties of Synaspismos and AKOA, the Summer University gathered activists and members of parties and social movements from all over Europe, for debates on current political and social issues.

The 4 thematic axes of this year’s Summer University have been:

- Building Solidarity during the Crisis – Towards a New Society
- Against Authoritarian Capitalism – For a Democratic, Social, Ecological and Feminist Europe
- The Future of Europe and the Relation of Europe with the Rest of the World
- The Cooperation among Parties, Trade Unions and Social Movements on a National and European Level

During the workshops and the plenaries, participants shared experiences and discussed policies and initiatives for the construction of an alternative Europe.

Find a series of videos as well as a picture gallery on the websites of EL [www.european-left.org](http://www.european-left.org) (Information → Summer university) and *transform!europe* [www.transform-network.net](http://www.transform-network.net) (Programmes → Summer university)

*transform!* took care of collecting reports on various seminars and plenaries, the result is the documentation at hand. The responsibility for the content of the reports stays with the respective authors.

*Many thanks to all who contributed to this documentation!*

## Overview

### ■ Tuesday, 17 July 2012

Feminist gender day (organized by the EL-FEM Network)

**Thematic Axis: Care-Work and Care-Economy as the Heart of a Human Society and Solidarity Economy**

### ■ Wednesday, 18 July 2012

**1<sup>st</sup> Thematic Axis: Building Solidarity During the Crisis – Towards a New Society**

Plenary:

- Building Solidarity during the Crisis .....3

### ■ Thursday, 19 July

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thematic Axis: Against Authoritarian Capitalism. For a Democratic, Social, Peaceful, Ecological and Feminist Europe**

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■ Friday, 20 July

**3<sup>rd</sup> Thematic Axis: The Future of Europe – Europe and the World**

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■ Saturday, 21 July

**4<sup>th</sup> Thematic Axis: “United We Stand”: Cooperation Among Parties, Trade-Unions and Social Movements on a National and European Level**

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## Reports

### Plenary

## Building Solidarity during the Crisis

*Report by Panagiotis Pantos, NPI*

### Presentations

- Moderation/Introduction: *Panagiotis Pantos* (Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Greece)
- *Francine Mestrum* (Global Social Justice, transform! working group Brussels, Belgium)
- *Petros Linardos Rylmon* (Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Workers INE/GSEE, Greece)
- *Ilias Ziogas* (Member of SYN.ALLOIS cooperative, Greece)
- *Apostolis Lazarou* (Network for exchange and solidarity of Magnisia, Greece)
- *Rafa Mayoral* (Plataforma Afectados por las Hipotecas, Spain)
- *Maria Liapi* (European Anti-Poverty Network, Greece)
- *Francesco Piobbichi* (Brigate di Solidarieta Attiva, Italy)

All over Europe, the economic crisis’ effects are not limited to the economic sphere (depression, deterioration of the standard of living for the population, further shrinking of social benefits etc.) but extend to the whole social sphere. For example, in Greece, the country that hosted this year’s EL Summer University and the one most severely attacked by austerity measures, the crisis has led to a widespread rejection of the dominant economic paradigm and its values. Profit, wealth, social recognition

via luxurious consumption, are not only seen by large parts of the population as unreachable, but also remind constantly the country's decadence and constitute symbols of a fake abundance and – even more importantly – of a shallow era. As a result, a rare mobility at the society's base has been created, converging with similar tendencies at the level of political values and opinions. It is of course too soon to tell where all this is going to lead, nevertheless we shouldn't fail to see that the future's character is an open bet: things can as easily move to a left or to a right-wing radicalism, to an emancipating rupture with current social models or to an extremely conservative fallback.

It is in this context that we should look at the emergence of various collectivities seeking to respond to the crisis by establishing solidarity initiatives, as well as at the increasing interest in social or solidarity economy. Obviously, a significant audience is experimenting with alternative economic models, new forms of collective action and at the same time is looking into the “theory” behind all that. The speakers in the **first part** of the session were asked to elaborate in such theoretical aspects of the issue:

**Francine Mestrum** (Global Social Justice, transform! working group Brussels, Belgium) presented a radical approach of the notion of social rights and of their relation to individual rights. According to her analysis, a leftwing social movement approach should try to overcome the tension occurring often between individual and social rights by recognizing that the full implementation of individual rights relies in the existence of a rich base of recognized and “active” social rights.

**Petros Linardos Rylmon** (INE/GSEE, Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Workers, Greece) presented the basic principles of social economy and explained why it could be a first step to an alternative economic model that would focus on the needs of people and not on profits.

**Ilias Ziogas** (member of SYN.ALLOIS cooperative, Greece) presented a short history of the emergence and development of social economy in Greece, emphasizing in the sector's recent growth and the different organization models adopted.

In the **second part** of the session four speakers presented their experience from the initiatives they participate in, offering concise information on their work, but also valuable insights on the conditions that led to their creation:

**Apostolis Lazarou** (Network for Exchange and Solidarity of Magnisia, Greece) presented the success story of a collectivity that created an alternative currency and organised a broad network for the exchange of products and services.

**Rafa Mayoral** (Platform of those Affected by Mortgages, Spain) presented the principles on which the Spanish movement to protect those who risk to lose their homes under the burden of their debts is built, in an effort to fight not only extreme impoverishment, but the deprivation of even the right to a home.

**Maria Liapi** (European Anti-Poverty Network, Greece) presented the work of EAPN and its experience with the rapid deterioration of the conditions of living for the poorest part of the population in the countries facing hard austerity measures.

**Francesco Piobbichi** (BSA, Brigades of Active Solidarity, Italy) discussed the principles guiding the interventions of BSA, a network aiming at the self-organisation of the people to respond to situations of crisis or emergency, but with a point of view clearly in favor of the creation of spaces of class struggle and emancipation in the long run.

## Workshop

# Is Feminism out of Fashion or Do We Still Need it?

*Report by Barbara Steiner, transform!europe*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Judit Morva* (Monde Diplomatique, Hungary)
- *Gitte Pedersen* (Red-Green Alliance, Denmark)
- *Giovanna Capelli* (Member of the EL ExB, Rifondazione Comunista, Italy)
- *Clara Alonso* (Communist Party of Spain, Spain)
- *Birge Krondorfer* (transform!at, Austria)

This is a brief and subjective summary of the discussions in this workshop, I tried to focus on the convergencies, divergencies and conclusions/the possible political proposals. The answer to the question put in the title was clear very soon: Feminism is still necessary and needed, following some points why:

## Convergencies

- Violence against women is founded in patriarchal rule and rising in the times of crisis and precarisation. Also problematic is the media communication on it – violence against women is often pictured as a mad man's action but not as systematically and deeply rooted in whole society and patriarchal system.
- Self determination is defined in neoliberalism as competitive and individualistic. A left idea of self-determination would be a collective and solidaric one.
- Patriarchal structures exist also in Left Parties – we have to fight this also.
- Crisis affects women especially – unemployment, increase of precarisation, unpaid private care work grows, public sector cuts affect women more. “Male” system of capitalism has caused the crisis.
- Capitalism and a life in dignity and sustainability is more and more incompatible
- Church and religion is misogynic power
- Antimilitarism

## Divergencies

- Deconstruction of Gender possible? Is the two-gender-model the necessary base for a feminist fight?
- Is feminism only for women? Shouldn't men also much more be involved in feminist struggles, shouldn't feminism be a demand for men too. What could be the reason for men to engage in the feminist struggle? Is feminism selfliberation and a progressive idea also for men *OR* can men explore their fatherhood, their “feminine, more peaceful” side?
- What is more important – fight against patriarchy or against capitalism? Or both at the same time?

## Political Proposals that came up in the discussions:

We need sustainable lives – for whole world, whole society

Rewrite history make it a “herstory” – making women visible

Proposal that our party leaders declare themselves as feminists, as it is usual in Scandinavia already

Proposal to abolish all armies, as brought already forward by many left parties

## Workshop

# Making Democracy Real

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Elias Chronopoulos* (Member of the Secretariat of the Youth of Synaspismos, Greece)
- *Tasia Hristodouloupoulou* (Member of the Secretariat of SYRIZA, Greece)
- *Alessio Ciacci* (Associazione Ambiente e Partecipazione Comune Capannori, Italy)
- *Peter Fleissner* (President of transform!at, Austria)
- *Silja Bara Omarsdottir* (Adjunct lecturer, University of Iceland, Iceland)

## Workshop

# Overcoming Ecological Crisis – Radical Proposals for an Alternative Development

Report by *Haris Konstantatos*, SYRIZA

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Haris Konstantatos* (Working Group of SYRIZA for the Environment, Greece)
- *Corinne Morel Darleux* (National Secretary for Ecology of Parti de Gauche, France)
- *Marisa Matias* (Vice-President of the EL, MEP of Bloco de Esquerda, Portugal)

- *Michael Löwy* (Sociologist, Emeritus research director, French National Center of Scientific Research, France)

Invited speakers were Corinne Morel Darleux (National Secretary for Ecology of Parti de Gauche, France), Marisa Matias (Vice-President of the EL, MEP of Bloco de Esquerda, Portugal), Michael Löwy (Sociologist, Emeritus research director, French National Center of Scientific Research, France). Moderator was Haris Konstantatos, from the Working Group of SYRIZA for the Environment. The seminar gathered about 50 participants in the audience and there were numerous questions, comments and interventions from the audience.

Some important elements for a left and socialist strategy over ecological issues were highlighted in the debate, such as:

Today, new ecological threats are posed in the context of capitalist crisis; aggressive neoliberal policies of exploitation cause “environmental dumping” in regions of the (European) South; new geographical disparities and “ecological debts” are created and overlap with class, gender and other inequalities. At the global level, the environment and climate international talks have collapsed and the ideal of “sustainable development” is demised: it’s an end of the period when “green economy” or “eco-modernization” were ideologically promoted by the elites as a solution to problems of capitalist economy vis-a-vis the environment.

The condition of the crisis validates the critique of the left and social movements on the inherent systemic contradictions of neoliberalism and the non-sustainability of dominant models of production and consumption. The withdrawal of certain discourses of dominant European political forces on environment and economic development opens a space of possibilities and new directions for the organization of sociopolitical futures – a matter which concerns new societal relations to nature and common resources and alternative routes for human development.

To that direction, new radical social movements are adopting a distinct political ecological agenda: A critique to modernist productivism and the concept of growth, the advancement of the Commons as non-proprietary spaces and assets under collective (not necessarily statist) management and an emphasis on participatory, horizontal decision-making structures.

So, contemporary left needs to distance for a technocratic depoliticized view of developmental issues, which assumes a “neutral”, scientific decision-making on development, done mostly by experts on behalf of the “whole society” and, supposedly, universally beneficial to all.

The incorporation of the political ecological critique by the Left has taken and various forms – with particular starting points and emphases among parties and movements in different contexts. Special references were made to the concept of “ecological planning” incorporated in the French Left Front program and other aspects of a left ecological politics at all scales: locally to internationally. Towards eco-socialist futures; there’s need to question the concepts of development and growth and examine the qualitative (e.g. labour, social care) aspects of possible “degrowth” tactics.

## **Workshop**

# **The Ideological Struggle about History. Opposing Historical Revisionism**

### **Speakers**

- Moderation/Introduction: *Stavros Panagiotidis* (Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Greece)
- *Prokopis Papastratis* (Professor emeritus, Panteion University, Greece)
- *Inna Shupak* (Secretary of the Union of Communist Youth of Moldova, MP of PCRM, Moldova)
- *Iлона Svihlikova* (Political Economist, Czech Republic)

## **Workshop**

# **Young People During the Crisis: Precarity and Collective Action**

The seminar concerned mainly the situation and mobilization of young people and a discussion about how they tend to organize – their attitudes to political parties etc. I have chosen to quote parts of the introductory speeches and the discussion in this report.

**Speakers:**

- Moderation/Introduction: *Dimitris Karamanis* (ENDYL and Youth of Synaspismos)
- *Marina Albiol* (local MP, Izquierda Unida in Valencia, Spain)
- *Adriano Campos* (Precarios Inflexiveis, Portugal)
- *Rosa Lund* (MP - The Red-Green Alliance, Denmark)
- *Michel Vakaloulis* (Professor, University Paris VIII, France/Greece)

**Introduction:**

EU leaders use the crisis to put into effect austerity policy. The young generation is hit by this.

- precarious work has become universal
- termination of stable work

The young people have to reinvent collective action against this.

Trade unions can't express the actions of the precarious workers. They are too bureaucratic – these actions are outside the demands of traditional trade unions.

There is a building up of networks of precarious workers. They do not negotiate with the state. They communicate with each other and make common demands.

Plan of action.

They work side by side with the traditional structures of to build up trade unions – but also try to change the traditional trade unions.

***Marina Albiol:***

Labour reforms of the Socialist Party have changed the labour market to a more precarious one.

Many are house owners – with very high prices before the crisis. Now a big campaign for the Right to have a house.

Also against the Bologna process – against privatization.

Over 50% youth unemployment now.

15th May Movement: Confidence in collective action – the first experience of politics of the young people. The Movement has had big success – the ability to persist and coordinate a big movement.

This spring was the first anniversary of the 15th May Movement. Also Valencian spring: A general strike on March 29 - an alliance between trade unions and 15th May Movement.

***Adriano Campos:***

Precarity is the goal of the Troika. 40% of workers are in a precarious situation.

Precarious movement in Portugal since 2007. Collective action in the last years.

“Precarious workers” (Precarios Inflexiveis) has been set up as an association this month. The goal is to break down the Troika and end these policies.

***Rosa Lund:***

The crisis should not be paid by our generation of young people, but by the 1% who created the crisis.

In Denmark 14% youth unemployment. The problems look less than in southern Europe. More welfare and more jobs in Scandinavia.

Think that it is important to make alliances and not to isolate oneself when in a situation of being without a job and income.

***Michel Vakaloulis:***

Common factors in the situation of the young: Lack of good financial situation and precariousness. Extremely high level of unemployment. A pressure always to perform – to individualize.

Despite a high level of education there is a problem to understand the financial markets. An opinion poll shows that young people are confused concerning the situation. Many young people think that the Liberals are better at handling the crisis.

Work places make a lot of money on young people.

Generally young people are not engaged for long in a specific cause.

The activists prefer “flat structures” (i.e. not centralized) and debate.

Their attitude to politics: They would like to get engaged with regard to growing job insecurity.

The movements are political innovators. Why are they not prominent in official politics?

An extraordinary huge number of young people voted SYRIZA in the elections.

#### **Questions from the audience:**

(Young person, Die Linke): How to coordinate national and international mobilization. Complaint about ENDYL (the European left youth cooperation) for not doing anything.

(Young Spanish participant in the movement): The young people involved in the movements are left wing but distance themselves from the political parties. There are very diverse situations so the protests can't be the same.

Information that a European Left youth network will be set up (Yiannis Bournous).

Concerning the fact that the young people in Greece “adopted” SYRIZA – how to create new dynamics?

(Greek woman): The movement developed step by step in Greece. The political party has to be present inside society itself.

(Young person, PCE, Spain): The parties must change – they should become more democratic, transparent.

#### **Conclusions:**

*Marina Albiol*: The movement had success because of ability to mobilize and to attract the media. Established network of solidarity. The 15th May Movement could not have developed without popular discontent with Spanish politics.

*Rosa Lund*: In Denmark there is the same development with higher youth unemployment than previously, but at a much lower level than in the southern European countries. Would like to learn from the experiences of the movements in Spain and Greece. Young people are generally more attracted to movements than to political parties.

*Michel Vakaloulis*: Social movements bring new issues forward. But it is necessary to work within the political parties. Many young people are attracted to impulsiveness (?).

*Adriano Campos*: Different models: In 2007-08 the strongest youth movement was the students' movement. The struggle takes place in our daily lives. Some common experiences between the movements in Spain and Portugal.

#### *Report II by Dimitris Karamanis, ENDYL and Youth of Synaspismos*

**Dimitris Karamanis** opened the seminar, with a recursion of the reforms in education and the labour market that have been made through the last fifteen years, on a European level. The Bologna Process, the Bolkenstein directive, the CPE in France, the labour market reform in Germany by Schroeder's SPD-CDU coalition government, the collapse of the social security system in Greece, Portugal and Spain were the background where the neoliberal leaders in each European country have built their strategy during the ongoing financial crisis. The main issue is that the precarity and the social insecurity in the majority of the European countries is now the rule for the European youth. The majority of young people, especially in the southern countries, are standing on the edge between precarity and unemployment. The crisis have been used by the neoliberal leaderships as a chance to impose more measures against the welfare state, the collective bargains and this lead to some very significant initiations by the social movements against these policies all over Europe. In Greece, the massive demonstrations against the IMF-EU and the Greek Government policies have put in the top of their demands, to stop precarity and unemployment and of course to stop dooming the Greek youth to social insecurity and immigration. At the end, Dimitris made a small reference to some initiations that have been made in Greece by precarious workers, with the most significant to be the Network of the Precarious and the Unemployed.

**Marina Albiol** mainly focused her presentation to the actions of the social movements in Spain the last years. She presented some very significant stats about the cuts in welfare state and public education in Spain and how these stats were combined with the enormous unemployment rates for the Spanish youth, which are now over 50%. Marina, who was a member of the 15M and the Indignados movement in Valencia, underlined the importance of these new social movements in Spain. All over the country, the squares were filled mostly by young people who wanted to discuss and act about what they face and this was the first time after many years that the Spanish neoliberal leaders felt the “people's threat” against their plans, so their answer was police brutality and violence against these demonstrations. Marina also made a reference to the movement that was grown against the austerity cuts in public schools and universities, mentioning that there were massive demonstrations in Madrid and the other major Spanish cities, which were strongly supported by Izquierda Unida and the majority of the Spanish society.

**Adriano Campos** was mainly engaged with the precarity issues. As a member of Bloco, he took part in a very important campaign that started several years ago, against precarity in Portugal. This campaign has managed to put the problem of precarity to the centre of the public discussion in Portugal and as a result there are various initiatives on this issue. Adriano also made a report on the squares' movement in Portugal, where the precarity issue was on the top of the discussions and the demands, but he insisted that the main need of organizing young people against precarity sometimes was pushed aside and the reason was that many times the discussion had become very vague and irrational in the squares. Finally, Adriano underlined the key role that the trade unions and the precarity initiatives are going to have to the resistance against the troika and the neoliberal austerity attack in Portugal.

**Rosa Lund**, at first mentioned that even if the situation is better for the youth in the Northern countries, the crisis has left some imprints up there. The precarity and the unemployment have been growing and the social movements in Denmark have to face an utterly new situation. She underlined the importance of a European coordination between initiatives against precarity, trade unions and political parties and she claimed that even if the dominant forces want to separate us to the rich northerners and the poor southerners we must not let them to do that. She claimed that the solidarity has to be our very first goal in our political acts and we have to find some new ways of coordination because until now we have not managed to have results on this issue.

Finally, **Michel Vakaloulis** made a theoretical presentation about the way that the European youth faces the crisis and how the young Europeans see the issue of political action. He pointed that the crisis and its effects have forced a part of the "silent majority" of the youth to take part in demonstrations, discussions and collective actions in order to fight for their own future. On the other hand, he claimed that in terms of organizing in political parties of the left, the results are very poor, even if the stats show that especially in Greece, the young people vote for the Radical Left. He mentioned that the youth movement is entering in a new phase where thousands of young people face a situation of unemployment and precarity that they were never thought they have to, so our biggest concern is to find the ways in order to have these people in the front row of the resistance against the neoliberal policies. Finally, he stated that a very important danger is that a part of the European youth is attracted by the populist far-right ideology (or even Nazism in Greece or fascism in Italy), so this is a very big issue that the Left has to face the very next period.

## Workshop

# Immigrants – Solidarity, Collective Action and Common Class Struggle

*Report (in French) by Gregory Mauzé, ACJJ*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Tasia Hristodouloupoulou* (Member of the Secretariat of SYRIZA, Greece)
- *Yiannis Albanis* (Network of Social Support for Refugees and Immigrants, Greece)
- *Annette Groth* (MP of Die Linke, Germany)
- *Juan Gonzalez Vidriales* (European Secretary of Sao Paolo Forum, PCU, Uruguay)
- *Raymond Chauveaux* (Sans papiers, France)

Comme beaucoup d'autres sujets traités lors de cette université d'été, l'organisation d'un atelier consacré à la question de l'immigration trouvait une signification particulière dans une Grèce en crise devenue la porte d'entrée pour près de 90% des migrants souhaitant se rendre en Europe. Bien qu'une large partie de cet atelier fût consacré à la Grèce, plusieurs sujets essentiels abordés permirent d'éclairer des enjeux qui touchent l'ensemble de l'Europe, voire du monde.

**Tasia Hristodouloupoulou**, membre du comité central de Syriza commença par un amer constat : après avoir contribué au développement économique des pays occidentaux (parfois de façon remarquable), les migrants sont de moins en moins acceptés avec la crise. Ils sont dès lors plus fréquemment expulsés quand ils ne sont pas l'objet d'un racisme de plus en plus assumé ouvertement par l'Etat et une partie de la population. Dans le cas de la Grèce, Elle souligne qu'après avoir connu plusieurs phases successives d'immigration, la Grèce est devenu petit à petit un pays de transit, dans lequel peu de migrants

désirent s'établir. Cette situation conduit parfois à une situation humanitaire désastreuse, où les migrants clandestins sont de plus en plus nombreux à résider dans le pays sans identité officielle, et donc sans droits.

Second intervenant, **Yiannis Albanis** du réseau de soutien social pour les réfugiés et migrants s'attarda davantage sur les particularités du cas grecs, notamment sur la situation humanitaire désastreuse des immigrés en Grèce, qui font plus que jamais en période de crise office de bouc-émissaire (*scapegoats*). Il insista particulièrement sur l'importance de déconstruire les idées reçues sur les migrants, qui s'avère essentiel pour pointer du doigt les réels responsables de la crise. Manifester de la solidarité avec les migrants n'est donc pas que de l'humanisme, mais correspond aux intérêts des travailleurs.

Secrétaire européen du forum social de Sao Paolo, **Juan Gonzalez Vidriales** en provenance de l'Uruguay Insista quant à lui sur l'importance d'un cadre de lutte commun de classe, et souligna le fait que travailleurs migrants et autochtones sont soumis à la même relation d'exploitation par rapport au capitale. Il prône ainsi une alliance sur une base syndicale de protection de droits de tous les travailleurs. Il insista aussi sur l'importance, en Europe, de combattre les politiques migratoires européennes, en particulier la directive retour de 2008, qui facilite l'expulsion des illégaux dans leur pays d'origine.

Ancienne fonctionnaire de l'ONU et spécialisée dans les questions migratoires et humanitaires, la députée fédérale allemande (Die Linke) **Annette Groth** développa, sur base de son expérience de terrain une critique des camps de rétention établis à la frontière gréco-turque où sont rassemblés les migrants dans des conditions qui violent tous leurs droits économiques et sociaux. Elle s'attaqua également à l'iniquité des politiques migratoires européennes, notamment des accords Dublin II qui prévoient de renvoyer les clandestins dans le premier pays d'Europe dans lequel ils ont été enregistré, ce qui dans les faits conduit à un afflux de migrants dans les pays pauvres du sud de l'Europe. La députée souligna également les liens entre le chaos dans les pays du Tiers-monde et l'immigration vers l'UE. Et la députée de souligner toute l'hypocrisie qu'il y a à traiter cette question uniquement sous l'angle de la répression, en particulier en ce qui concerne l'immigration afghane, tunisienne ou encore malienne.

Le syndicaliste de la CGT française **Raymond Chevaux** acheva le cycle d'intervention par un témoignage sur l'organisation de la première grève de sans-papiers en 2009, qu'il a personnellement coordonné. Celle-ci a permis d'attirer l'attention sur les conditions de travail désastreuse des migrants dans le secteur de la restauration. « *Les migrants ont été défendus comme n'importe quels travailleurs précaires* », précisa le syndicaliste. M. Chevaux conclut en démontant méthodiquement l'argumentaire cher à l'extrême-droite selon lequel les immigrés font baisser les salaires. « *Toute situation salariale dépréciée tire forcément les salaires vers le bas. C'est pourquoi il importe de lutter pour les droits des migrants et pour l'amélioration de leurs conditions de travail* ».

Les débats ont en outre été enrichis par la présence inattendue de trois jeunes migrants africains installés dans un foyer pour migrants mineurs non-accompagné au village voisin de Makrinita, et invités par des membres de *Transform !* à assister à ce séminaire. « *Nous ne voulons pas voler le travail des grecs, simplement chercher un avenir meilleur* », avança avec émotion l'un d'entre eux à la tribune de l'auditoire. Si leur présence fut très instructive et permit de donner à cet atelier une dimension plus concrète, le caractère inopiné de leur présence devrait cependant conduire la gauche à réfléchir sur une tendance trop fréquente à parler au nom des immigrés sans en faire des parties prenantes. Le fait qu'aucun intervenant issu de l'immigration n'ait été initialement invité à intervenir lors de ce séminaire témoigne également de cette forme de paternalisme, qui consiste davantage à agir *pour* les immigrés, quand il faudrait agir *avec* eux. Les forces progressistes sauront-elles en tenir compte à l'avenir ? Une chose semble certaine : aucun bloc social de grande ampleur n'est possible s'il n'inclut pas de façon active la catégorie particulièrement précaire des travailleurs sans-papiers.

## Workshop

# Culture and Crisis

Report by José Soeiro, *cul:tra*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Olga Athaniti* (Actress, Member of the EL ExB, AKOA, Greece)
- *José Soeiro* (Sociologist, "Theatre of the Oppressed", Portugal)
- *Juha Pekka Vaisanen* (Conceptual artist, General Secretary of the Finnish Communist Party, Finland)
- *Eva Brenner* (Experimental Theatre, Austria)

Culture in crisis, culture of crisis, crisis of culture. The cultural dimension has been with very low-profile in the European Left Summer Universities. Paradoxically the cultural sector, most of the time seen as an adornment or useless luxury, is one of the

first areas to be affected by the austerity measures that are being applied all over Europe: labour precarity of creators and technicians, cuts in all public policies for culture, the commodification of cultural production or its reduction to the profitable “cultural industries”, the concentration of media in few private hands and its consequences in funding and reduction of plurality, the idea of culture as a simple set of “big events” and “touristic attractions”, leading to a lack of density and continuity in the conception of it as a public service at the core of democracy.

At the same time, there is no real counterhegemonic resistance and alternative without an intense cultural work, with the contest and the dispute of the narratives, images, sounds, symbols and common sense ideas that make neoliberal politics and austerity orientation to be dominant in Europe. Cultural work is one of the crucial battlefields for the Left.

In the panel held at EL Summer University, experiences of cultural activist were shared. Performance and carnival as means of intervention and creating community in neighbourhoods and with migrants. Theatre of the Oppressed used as a way of doing politics through performance, democratizing parliamentary debates and linking institutional work to the movements. Graphic design, installations and happenings as a provocative language that occupies public space and invites people to think about what is often not visible in political decisions.

The debate was rich in interventions and contributions. What can we consider to be the heritage of a Marxist aesthetic thought, from Lukács to Brecht? How to resist to postmodernist dismissal of all narratives of social transformation and collective action? How to develop new artistic means to reach people that are not familiar with some artistic languages? How to take culture to the street and create alternatives to the “shopping mall” model? How to integrate artistic creation in the “culture of commons”? How to promote the encounter of the majority of people with diverse artistic forms, allowing to each citizen to access to the biggest possible repertoire of art expressions? How to connect the cultural field with the artistic one, repoliticizing culture and culturalizing political intervention? How to develop, in the new conditions of the movement and of political struggle, the tradition of workers’ and other social movements being also cultural communities, with its associations, cooperatives, songs, theatres?

One of the outcomes of this panel was the creation of a mailing list to keep in contact people interested in the existence of a European Left working group on Culture. This group or this network of contacts has many challenges: to promote critical reflection about cultural policies, to propose a deeper and more significant cultural programme in next EL initiatives (politics is also about cinema, music, performative arts, and so on), to promote innovative models for the debates in the diverse issues (from unionism to feminist struggle or economy), to put in contact left wing cultural activists and producers, in order to strengthen the solidarity and the exchange.

## Workshop

# The Rise of the Nationalist, Authoritarian and Racist Right in Europe. Which Challenges for the Left?

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Walter Baier* (Coordinator of transform! europe, Austria)
- *Dimitris Christopoulos* (Political Scientist, Greece)
- *Jan Kavan* (Former Foreign Minister, Czech Republic)
- *Eleni Varika* (Professor, University Paris VII, France/Greece)

## Plenary

# Crisis, Neoliberal Domination and Post-Democracy

*Report by Loudovikos Kotsonopoulos and Barbara Steiner*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Loudovikos Kotsonopoulos* (Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Greece)

- *Bob Jessop* (Distinguished Professor, University of Lancaster, UK)
- *Marisa Matias* (Vice-President of the EL, MEP of Bloco de Esquerda, Portugal)
- *Konstantinos Tsoukalas* (Professor emeritus, University of Athens, Greece)
- *Gabriele Michalitsch* (Economist, Political scientist, Austria)

### **Bob Jessop**

Bob Jessop focused on the nature of the current crisis and successively tackled the questions of neoliberalism and post-Democracy.

According to his analysis the current crisis is not one-dimensional, rather it has many facets the most prominent of them being the following: It is a crisis of financed dominated accumulation of capital, a crisis in neoliberalism, a crisis of U.S. Hegemony and U.S. domination in the world order, a crisis of European Integration, a crisis in the process of World market integration and last but not least an environmental crisis.

Politicians and the Media are employing particular metaphors to account for the crisis drawing concepts from physical disasters vocabulary. In this respect the crisis is described as a tsunami or an earthquake, i.e. as something accidental without any identifiable cause. Furthermore the crisis is presented as global. Both of these metaphors are concealing two basic factors:

- 1) That the crisis is not accidental but is brought about by the longstanding contradictions inherent in the logic of capital accumulation.
- 2) That the crisis has been now disseminated at the global level, however its origins lie in the operations of North Atlantic capitalism and the particular type of finance dominated capital accumulation this model of capitalism promoted.

Having pinpointed some key features of the current crisis, Jessop took up the issue of neoliberalism by starting from its historical mission which is nothing more than the integration of the world market that is why neoliberalism is inscribed in the logic of capitalism as such. This global market integration is pursued by certain policy characteristics that neoliberalism has, i.e. liberalisation, deregulation, privatization, internationalization, lowering taxes.

Although an inherent tendency of capitalism, neoliberalism still is not unison and possesses many faces. In this context, one can hardly make the case that neoliberalism is a complete political project, rather it is a hybrid engaging in symbiotic relationships with other political projects and taking the form of either policy adjustments or regime shifts. A case of such a symbiotic relationship is the Third Way politics in Britain during the late 90's. The current crisis is a severe crisis of financially dominated accumulation but not of neoliberalism.

Jessop concluded his intervention by focusing on the issue of post democracy. He made the point that the term post-democracy, as it is fashioned in Colin Crouch's work, is problematic and of little explanatory value. Jessop suggested that instead of using new terms one has to focus on the antidemocratic tendencies inherent in the nature of Capital. In order to explain how democracy is disappearing, he recurses to the work of Max Weber. The latter distinguishes between rational capitalism and political capitalism where accumulation is secured via the financing of the political system. This is the case of neoliberalism generated in the US where massive lobbying of capital buys out the support of political power. Capital accumulation is mostly dependent on the political organization of production and not the rational organization of production. This lays the ground for the proliferation of antidemocratic tendencies.

### **Marisa Matias**

Marisa Mathias elaborated further the theoretical issues brought up by Bob Jessop and provided some crucial insights on how the neoliberal democratic deficit operates within the EU institutions. From its very beginnings the project of European Integration was geared towards, mostly market integration, a trend well encapsulated in the treaty of Rome, ignoring the social dimension of Europe. Nowadays we are standing before a crisis of integration generated by the crisis of the markets and fueled from the fact that the social dimension is completely absent from the EU. The once prevalent European solidarity is now shattered into pieces and instead we have the development of moral hazard politics dividing the countries into the sinners of the South and the prudent of the North.

A clear indication of the undemocratic turn made at the level of EU institutions is the role of European Central Bank. Mathias argued that the fact that ECB's policies, usually obsessed with inflation curtailment, remain democratically unchecked is one of the main causes of the Eurozone crisis. The latter started when the ECB refused to buy Government Bonds and this paved the way to the bailout plans and austerity policies. In other words the ECB preferred to save the banks and not the countries. All these led to the fabrication of the public debt crisis and transformed the Southern countries into an experimental laboratory of neoliberal politics. Nobody asks the key question: How much does it cost to the Greek, the Portuguese and the Irish People the crisis management of the EU? The response must be against these austerity measures both at the level of ideology and at the level of institutions with reforms such as the transformation of the ECB role and the introduction of a social budget at the EU level.

### **Gabriele Michalitsch**

Gabriele Michalitsch shifted the vantage point of the panel from the structural features of neoliberalism, presented eloquently by the previous speakers, to its micro foundations. The focus of the presentation went beyond neoliberal domination to explore the persistence of neoliberal subjectivity. Drawing on Foucault's theoretical concepts of truth, which is closely associated the production of academic knowledge, and power, again associated with the productive and not the submissive dimension of power, Michalitsch explores how the neoliberal subject is constructed at the level of economic theory by linking the subject to economic rationality. She argued that a par excellence case of an attempt to expand neo-classical economic thinking as a cognitive form of interpretation of several spheres of social life can be found in the theoretical work of Nobel Laureate Gary Becker. There are two mechanisms in the latter's work that provided the impetus for the construction of neoliberal subjectivity. The first was that individual rationality was premised on a rational calculation of cost and benefits with a clear cut aim to maximize individual utility. The second, which infused economic rationality into the inner self, was Becker's theory of Human capital. According to that all the activities of the individual were considered as investments in oneself. These two mechanisms produced a knowledge that was popularized and circulated by the media constructing a neoliberal subjectivity based on the following nine dimensions: Self reliance - caring/responsibility for oneself vs social responsibility, entrepreneurship (forming the environment, creativity), individual activity vs passive recipient of welfare state, choice usually realized in the markets as promotion of endless possibilities but the access to those possibilities is never questioned, liberty only within the market, competition (e.g. unemployment is individual problem) and the understanding of individual as a self-product (this is an *ahistorisation on individual level*), the universal merit principle and *fairness – in contrast to justice – not refers to society as a whole but to individual only*

One conclusion is, there has been taking place a basic redefinition of the private – public relation and what is political sphere (Thatcher's quote: "There is no such thing as society") -- if everything is private there is no need for democracy  
Another conclusion is that the ruling economic discourse formed and used to govern people  
We observe a constant loss of critical contextualization, disconnectivity of discourses and growing political illiteracy  
Finally Michalitsch proposes that the Left should question all these neoliberal postulates and subjectivity dimensions. We should be offering contra-concepts: what could be recognition beyond market success?! This is connected with a severe re-evaluation of what is regarded valuable in society – has to go beyond commodification.

### **Konstantinos Tsoukalas**

Tsoukalas initiated his intervention by torturing a cliché : The world is in transition- in a sense always it is – but we do not know where exactly this transition will lead. There is, however, an element in this transition that is not unique and we have witness it many times before in times of crises. Thos transition is accompanied by a rapid transformation of most of the conceptual tools we have at our disposal to understand the world. In the field of social sciences, in particular, this transformation assumes two dimensions.

1) We are beginning to have a difficulty in providing a clear definition of what society exactly is. This is happening mostly due to the fact that Globalization is causing a rapid integration of modern societies into a larger unit, which is equally difficult to be defined. This process blurs the distinction between the internal and the external upon which societies were used to be defined, the domestic and the foreign, the territorial and the trans-territorial.

2) The second dimension is closely associated with the first. Because there is a difficulty in defining society, there is also a difficulty in defining the instances of society. Thus the distinction between the public and the private or the political and the economic is blurred.

In the context of this transformation the issue of democracy comes to the forefront. To define democracy Tsoukalas uses the concept of Castoriades. According to the latter democracy comes into being when the people challenge collectively the existing order and take their destinies in their hands by overthrowing it. This is the point where political philosophy, democracy and the political are emerging and Modernity begins. Current transformation exactly curtails this notion of democracy. What was political is now considered as an element which is beyond the scope of current decision making. Moreover, the exact scope of decision making is not defined by the political body anymore, rather is defined by economic rationality. According to Tsoukalas we are heading towards a "milkman's democracy", that is a quasi-democracy populated by quasi-citizens the rights of whom are at the disposal of economic and political power.

### **STATEMENTS from the audience**

**Mariana Mortagua:** Neoliberal narratives of "success if you try hard enough" and of separation of state and economy is dismantled: Today's austerity measures are based and legitimized on a narrative of sacrifice, not of success. And with the bailout of banks no one can say that there is no regulation by state and institutions. Mortagua calls this "neo-conservative" era?

**Michel Löwy:** Liberal democracy and capitalism are historically not intertwined. Capitalism is not only Europe – in the colonial systems there were always very little democracy

Statement of **solidarity with Spanish activists** and people

**Catherine Samary:** Ordoliberalism is a shift – it needs a state for free market. Universal declaration of human rights was an instrument of the der westlichen kapitalistischen Staaten um gegenüber der USSR zu zeigen, dass sie besser sind. Wir sollten heute zeigen, dass Kapitalismus heute genau diese zerstört – Krise der Zivilisation

**Susa, DK:** Nowadays we are only talking about the crisis as finance or debt crisis. But the collapse of the welfare state has also been a crisis. Naming it now a crisis is used often to legitimate the cut backs of what people gained from capital in times of the welfare state.

**Tim, UK:** It is to mention and think of that Europe is continuously being engaged in wars

### **Final round of short statements**

#### **Jessop**

Against the individualization of neoliberalism – against the narrative of “we are all in the same boat” e.g. against “yellow peril” – cheap work force in China. Financial capitalism is crashing, that doesn’t mean that financial capital is in crisis - on the contrary, it strikes back, rearms

#### **Matias**

There is a problem with common currency without common monetary policy - the European budget and the ECB are not democratically legitimated

#### **Michalitsch**

At universities critical economic is not taught, all think neoclassic economic theory is a natural law. [Neoclassic theory never talks of financial market but of financial oligarchy only] Same in schools (are used to produce obedient citizens) The Left has to work on discourses and on common definitions.

#### **Tsoukalas**

Now we live an authoritarian turn: Law, order and paternalist rationality, the new word of safety does not mean (social) security

## **Plenary**

# **The Crisis in Europe as a Part of the Global Crisis**

*Report by Louis Weber; Espaces Marx*

### **Presentations**

- Moderation/Introduction: *Costas Isychos* (Member of the Political Secretariat of Synaspismos, Greece)
- *Valter Pomar* (Sao Paulo Forum, PT, Brazil)
- *Maitte Mola* (Vice-President of the EL, PCE, Spain)
- *Rena Dourou* (MP of SYRIZA, Greece)
- *Fabio Amato* (Member of the Secretariat of the EL, International Affairs responsible of Rifondazione Comunista, Italy)

Introducing the Speakers (several have come directly from Sao Paulo)

**Costas Isychos:** We are all supporters of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism, however we must imagine specific paths leading to it. The world is marked by the imprint of neoliberalism. The world’s Lefts must open up ways of cooperation. The different speakers will give their points of view regarding the crisis at European level.

**Valter Pomar:** He Introduces the Sao Paulo Forum and stresses the importance of the resolution adopted at Caracas. How does the crisis in Europe fit into the global crisis? How can the world crisis be tackled in Latin America? How should we react? The world crisis is that of neoliberal capitalism (hegemonic since 1980). Political orientations must be defined starting from its

many dimensions. The geopolitical centre of the world has moved from Europe to Asia. The decline of the United States is provoking aggressive reactions characterised by a reactionary swing within it and the serious dangers of war outside it (dollar, arms).

There is, today, a conflict between the neoliberal model and “State capitalism” (USA + EU against BRIC). Alter-capitalism remains on the defensive.

Uncertainty reigns regarding what will happen regarding getting out of the crisis. Conflicts are developing between States and within States (class conflicts). We are faced with a contradiction based on conflict between States and the power of the transnationals. There is not yet enough power against them. How to win? Neoliberalism must be overcome and a transition towards an advanced socialist society. Something is happening in Latin America: the Left is in office or is the most powerful opposition force. The elections of Chavez and Lula were support points for the exploited classes and countries. However, the process is far from perfect we lack laboratories created by scientific policies. With Obama the American conservatives are reacting strongly (victory of the Right in Guatemala, Chile etc). The Spanish conservatives are very active in Latin America; the PSOE has an ambiguous position. Despite a difficult world situation, some advances are possible as the example of Latin America shows. However, without support from other parts of the world the future is uncertain. It is thus important that the European Left defend the social State, Human Rights, stop colonialist intervention — a form rehabilitated by the presence of Europe (governments but also transnationals as well as the Malouinas and the Caribbean). If the working class does not achieve hegemony there will not be any deep-seated change. In Latin America politics are the central issues. We must rally round projects, combine social and ideological struggles and build parties.

It is essential to support Venezuela and Chavez (20% lead for Chavez in the polls). A solidarity campaign is under way. “Chavez, your victory is our victory”(Luka)

**Maité Mola** referred to the demonstrations in Spain; they are not just on the initiative of the majority trade unions but also of spontaneous movements. The construction of Europe is an absolute failure in all areas, particularly in the economic field, which is the most important in its consequences, the social destructuring that it is leading to. Maastricht is the source of this failure (a Europe of traders, the complete absence of a social Europe, a hard and pure capitalist policy).

Far from settling anything, the Lisbon treaty has aggravated the situation. Will the Merkel-Sarkozy axis be replaced by a Merkel\_Hollande axis? The situation is apocalyptic (including the Golden Dawn). All social progress is called into question. Authoritarianism is reigning everywhere. National Parliaments are disarmed — decisions are taken by 4 people in hotel room. In Moldavia the symbol of hammer and sickle has been banned. The international failure of the EU is clear (Afghanistan etc) Cyprus is a colony of Europe; the situation of the Spanish Sahara is a catastrophic.

Europe is proven its total incapacity. It is aligned with the United States in everything regarding Latin America (Cuba, Venezuela). The international failure of the EU is clear (Afghanistan etc) and its incapacity to create a pole to face up to the United States.

Luckily Europe is not alone. Alliances are possible but difficult because of differences and inequality. The ELP must be an instrument (alter-summit, Summer University). Among the alternatives possible it the creation of a public bank, democratic planning. This will not just come about through the institutions or demonstrations. We must create a social fabric.

Despite this, we can be optimistic: the Left has ceased theorising about what must be done but has started to do things. We can conquer our governments.

**Rena Dourou:** On Google, 600 million hits for the word crisis. The crisis takes on several dimensions. It endangers democracy, which it has stuck to the heart. The banks crisis has become a crisis of democracy, on both sides of the Atlantic. Democracy is becoming an empty shell. The neoliberal paradigm pretends to be liberal but, in reality, it is becoming totalitarian. This is not surprising since it is attacking workers’ rights. The Greek police is carrying out a work of violent repression, attacks factories. Poverty is increasing. Austerity has crushed the standard of living. We are seeing a return to primitive capitalism, imposing on everything. But neoliberalism is a harbinger of something else. It is a model that has not yet been stabilised. This leaves room for hope.

The European political elites have chosen the path of double oppression: austerity and attacks on human rights (cf Habermas). The crisis is no longer just economic. The road is open for a political programme that imposes the banks’ interests, The objective is, on the one hand to frighten, on the other to impose the “golden rule”, with, in the background calling democracy to question as in Italy and Hungary,

Liberal capitalism has gone into crisis. While we are optimistic about changing things in Europe, we are seeing the appearance of the BRICS, who are counter-balancing the power of the United States. The Left in Europe must express the will of the

peoples of Europe. We must organise common struggles for democracy, social rights and the public good. ... No one is except. Can we talk about the end of history? Of ideology? No—the people need the Left.

**Fabio Amato** begins his speech by recalling that it is the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Carlo Giuliani in Genoa.

Paradoxically, neoliberalism was born in the United States (Friedmann, Chile). But the only ones still using it today are the Europeans. This is not out of stupidity, but it is a project: they are using the debt as a weapon to crush the Social State and to promote a counter-reform. They are creating States of Emergency everywhere, especially in the South to reduce wages, labour costs so as to be competitive throughout the world. The workers will pay the price of these policies, including in Europe.

They complain that there is no political Union. But in a few years smashed everything. The budgetary package was passed in Italy with 90%, without any echo in the press.

The Left's objective must be to create a political coalition to thwart the immense coalition between the conservatives, liberals and social-democrats. These are not a solution but are parts of the problem. Liberals have as tools "governments of experts," great coalitions. Monti seems outside this game but he is supported by Berlusconi and the PD. In a few months he has smashed everything. We must change the balance of forces; create an alternative as in Greece where SYRIZA went from 4% to 27%. We must fight the "great coalition" that is governing Europe.

In Latin America, the change has begun in Venezuela, but it was preceded by Forums etc. The struggle of ideas assumes a major importance. The ELP has begun to act at European and national levels. Why not call for a day against austerity in Europe in October?

We do not want to end up in the arms of "sharks".

Changer is not enough — we need a democratic revolution.

**Costas Isykos** retune to the Latin American "model". We must fight in the European institutions to prevent the condemnation of Cuba. Colonialism must be fought, especially economic colonialism. He raised the danger of the Extreme Right that is emerging with the support of the system. Berlusconi was a reactionary but also morally abject.

The meeting adopted a declaration denouncing the violent intervention of the police at dawn in a Greek firm.

In the discussion, the issue of leaving the EU was raised and challenges taken up by the Left, the question of Latin America and of colonialism. The speakers returned to some aspects

Regarding rejecting the EU, referring to the "anti-European" speeches particularly by the Danes, Rena Dourou made the point that there was no theoretical link between the condemnation of the policies of the Social-democrats and the position regarding Europe.

What can the European Left do? Fall back on only national actions to fight the crisis? It must not fall back in the instruments and behaviour of the past. Having worked in the private sector it is aware that it is too easy to return to a national solution.

Fabio Amato recognises that the situation has worsened in Italy since the 80s. Is the EU a problem? We have voted against the major texts. Regaining sovereignty of the peoples must be combined with a popular sovereignty at the European Level. The Treaties cannot be reformed but this does not mean that we must go backwards. Europe must be rebuilt on new foundations and we must fight at the national level (elections etc). In Europe we must be inspired by the example of Latin America, where constituent assemblies were held everywhere. The people must regain the right to peak.

In the opinion of Maité Mola, the ideological battle has been lost. Class consciousness has evaporated. Workers voted for the PP (11 million voters). None of the media supports the Left. There remain the new technologies, but the situation is urgent: class consciousness is being lost rapidly and time is needed to rebuild it.

Several speakers recalled that the RLP is in favour of the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination even if not all its members have adopted that stand.

Valter Pomar stressed that Cuba played an important role in the history of the process in Latin America. Today its situation is difficult it has to restructure its economy, which is creating important problems.

Regarding the Malauinas or Porto Rico, self-determination is not relevant, especially as they plant a not insignificant role in the militarisation of the area (including nuclear). The accusations against Chavez (Chavez (he's a soldier, a populist, a radical, and personal...)) are based on half truths but there is a strategic necessity. Personal power has a tactical advantage but a strategic weakness. In Venezuela one can see some progress in all areas, particularly its role in regional integration. The process is peaceful but it has not disarmed!

Brazil is a capitalist country — the most capitalist in the region. It has only just engaged in the beginning of the transition. At best, it is a Latin American social-democracy (but under State control) with a coalition in office that includes a part of the Right. Some transfers have taken place, but inequality remains. The Right controls the Assemblies, the media, the Army etc. Without profound structural reforms some threats weight heavily, particularly on employment, growth, the future etc. In the struggle against neo-liberalism Brazil is lagging behind, but without Brazil regional integration would not be effective (cf the big Brazilian companies).

Forming cadres is important: there are organisations for forming and training them, publishing houses, a presence in the Universities. These three factors were dismantled in the 80s. A more recent process has been born with the creation of cadre schools in forms that are possibly new in all Latin America.

The proletariat continues to exist, despite changes in its composition. There is support from the peasants. The wage earners rate is developing. Certainly class-consciousness has subsided because of working conditions. The proletariat has seen the idea that it was building the future fade. Class-consciousness will experience a renewal that must be politically supported. The Left has experienced harder situations, particularly with fascism.

## Workshop

# North Vs South / West Vs East: Deconstructing Stereotypes

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Nassos Iliopoulos* (Secretary of the Youth of Synaspismos, Greece)
- *Laura Tuominen* (Left Alliance, Finland)
- *Petja Dimitrova* (Association of Fine Arts, Bulgaria /Austria)
- *Wolfgang Gehrcke* (MP of Die Linke, Germany)

## Workshop

# European Crisis and the Evolution of a New Political Landscape

*Report by Louis Weber, Espaces Marx*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Barbara Steiner* (transform! europe, Austria)
- *Raffaella Bolini* (ARCI, Italy)
- *Haris Golemis* (Director of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Greece)
- *Pierre Laurent* (President of the EL, National Secretary of PCF, France)
- *Elisabeth Gauthier* (Espaces Marx, France)

**Haris Golemis** (Syriza): Can Syriza's experience provide anything to the others? A victory (they were only 2% short) would have radically changed the situation in Europe. How did this heterogeneous coalition rise from 4% to 27%? This question interests everyone in Europe and the world.

Syriza's score cannot be transposed elsewhere because the situations and conditions are different in Europe.

The differences are diverse: the extent of the crisis at national level, the power a country may have to weigh on decisions in Europe due to its size, political traditions (consensus, great coalitions with Left parties, civil wars, dictatorships, classes, struggles, Church, school, family etc).

Despite this, the efforts are made easier because all the parties, European institutions, the ECB, the European Parliament sometimes, all propose a single model of development. To this extent Syriza's experience can be interesting.

In Greece, important problems were raised, notably cultural problems. The political crisis provoked the major parties to abandon the middle classes.

Subjective factors should also be noted: anger, large-scale strikes, demonstrations, civil disobedience (refusal to pay taxes) despite opposition from the trade unions. A soft opposition has developed in the country. As evidence to this the generalisation "movement in the Squares" throughout the country.

Despite pressure, Syriza did refuse to attack these spontaneous forms. Its activists took part in them, without seeking to impose their own views. This attitude was favourably welcomed.

All this took place in the context of a strategic policy that proved correct: no leaving Europe or the euro; the decision to disobey the Troika's injunctions; renegotiation of the Memorandum — but also to find solutions for wiping out the debt in a European context.

Two kinds of opposition were put forward: that of the Communist Party (KKE) and an internal opposition within Syriza, coming from who were the most eurosceptic. The Right and even the Democratic Party accused us of being anti-European, with the injunction: apply the Memorandum or leave Europe.

A third factor played a part: our appeal to form a Left government despite PASOK's refusal. This was an appeal to form a coalition going from the most radical Left to the Left socialists.

We must welcome the attitude of Tsipras, *Primus inter pares*, for developing a great Left party in Greece.

Does this mean that there was mobilisation everywhere? Not necessarily— there were anti-system reactions, abstentions and the extreme Right.

The objective was to build a new hegemony in Greece as well as a new European strategy — democratic socialism for peace.

Haris expressed his optimism on the unending road to emancipation.

**Pierre Laurent** found it relevant to wonder about the new political landscape in Europe in the context of the crisis. There are not only more or less strong electoral shifts but also, in different parts of Europe, political upheavals linked to the nature of the crisis.

The crisis is neoliberal (worldwide) but it is also a crisis of the building of Europe, since Europe sought to become a hyper-power in the world by becoming a financial hyper-power. This changed the status of the ECB (Europe is now directly in the hands of the markets). There is a crisis of legitimacy of the institutions. Abstention is increasing,

The 2008 crisis placed the EU in the centre of the cyclone. It has remained there.

The rulers decided that the substantial devaluation of financial capital in Europe should be paid for by the peoples, in particular by calling the social systems to question. This is not just a matter of retreats but of real breaches.

Faced with the lack of popular adherence to this policy, political authoritarianism has developed in a relatively gradual and "soft" manner by the popular Assemblies relinquishing their political powers.

All this is amplified by a crisis of civilisation (ecology, migrations, human activity losing its meaning). Nevertheless, the aspiration for change, that was noticeable in France through the success of the left Front's *L'Humain d'abord* (The Human First) programme is checked by the fear of change.

This situation has generated some political shocks. It can be seen in Greece, but also in Ireland and in Spain with the collapse of the PSOE. Political systems are being undermined. The Right is moving towards a becoming a populist, xenophobic Right, (in France it has become Atlanticist and racist). Moreover the extreme Rights are on the offensive, in new forms, affecting a social discourse, an offensive against immigrants, its true, but also attacking "mollycoddling" the underprivileged. The liberals are seeking to promote the idea that it is impossible to save everyone so some should be chosen.

The social-democratic discourse is drying up even though they are winning elections. Spain, France and Greece are not yet at a turning point but a significant stage has been reached.

Opportunities exist for waging a struggle about the causes of the crisis. Strong social resistances are at work, even though the political perspectives are weak as in Belgium. The emergence of a new European consciousness can be noted — that is to say the awareness of waging the fight at two levels, national and European.

After a difficult period, that has lasted several decades (splittings etc), there is a maturing of the construction of new political processes of the Left.

The political forces must be capable of seizing the opportunities, of being present at the right moment (Syriza, the campaign in France, the attitude towards the Indignant Ones in Spain).

Our tasks are various: to wage an ideological struggle to clarify the causes of the crisis, to struggle against divisions in the labour movement. The Left must make its voice heard by all wage earners; encourage popular activity. As well as resistance it must engage in a task of building. It must arouse political battles at European level on precise subjects such as the European citizen initiative for a Public European Bank.

It must pursue the work of political unity with parties and movements. The building up of an *alter-summit* represents a good example.

**Elisabeth Gauthier** lays out five points for a Left strategy based on the work of Transform!

Make as concrete as possible an analysis of the situation to define strategic options. The crisis in the mode of accumulation assumes many dimensions, but the power of financialised capital has not crumbled. The power block linked to this policy has not been seriously split. The Alternative Left has not yet succeeded in blowing up that hegemony. We are still in a defensive phase that is expressed by strong and multiple resistances and initiatives but also by the search for new alliances, of coordination of struggles — including at European level, though that remains a major building operation

Are we facing an insurrectionary phase (M15)? No because those in power have not been called to question, political consciousness remains vague. The only place where there has been an electoral breach is in Greece. However, a break cannot be carried through in a single European country. The Greek elections resulted in a break but not the French elections. Some new factors can be observed but also the persistence of loss of bearings, of meaning, of the feeling of powerlessness that can be used by the extreme Right etc. However, reconstruction is under way.

Wage a war of positions (Gramsci) against neoliberalism, which is adapting itself but not disappearing. The objective and subjective conditions are no longer favourable to it, but nothing is settled. The spectre of criticism must be broadened beyond that of finance (the mode of domination, exploitation, distribution of wealth, how to rebuild the collective, democracy). New voices are being raised to defend democracy (cf Habermas).

Take the risk of raising the question of power, of the issues at stake. Such an ambition is necessary if we want to mobilise. This must not remain the task of the parties alone but must be discussed by the movement as a whole, as the *alter-summit* example showed.

Find a new strategy for assembling. How can we build a new social and ideological block to carry forward the change? The oppressed are scattered (middle strata and impoverished, national citizens and immigrants, etc.). A majority of ideas is needed for political majorities, on the basis of convergences, not of identities. The experience of Syriza is interesting. The election results and the developments must be examined in terms of votes — but also in terms of hegemony.

A strategy of social transformation presupposes making our ideas flourish (educational meetings). A whole work of education must be carried on to increase the power of interpretation that is the basis of the ability to unite. What social block do we envisage? How to achieve the necessary connection between the national and European context? A historic window opened after the fall of the Berlin wall — but it was followed by silence. Some parties of the radical Left succeeded in rebuilding themselves. How can we use this window? The European field is contradictory: it is hard to “take power” in Europe — Europe is thus a factor of division, but also a field in which new forms can be invented since there are less traditions/obstacles.

The emergence of an alternative political subject on the Left is essential. It is necessary at both European and national levels to be able to work for the refoundation of Europe. The *alter-summit* is a process of building a new political event, which goes far beyond the process of Social Forums.

**Rafaella Bollini** (Italy) disputes the idea that the success in Greece came from the fact that the situation was very difficult. Indeed, difficult national situations exist elsewhere as well. It is injudicious to wait for the situation to deteriorate in order to duplicate what happened in Greece.

We must rally the forces to win. The bulk of progressive forces have accepted the neoliberal paradigm and continue to do so. Some people and groups want change but they are afraid for their existing concrete conditions of existence. It is not desirable to talk of the radical left. We need a strong left that can win, a broad hegemonic Left.

There is a loss of confidence in political parties. It may sometimes be useful to urge the renewal of parties but not necessarily. Alternative ideas (resistance and alternatives) are more readily shared today, but no one plays the role that we played in Genoa in 2001. Movements exist but are insufficiently convergent.

One of the problems is that no one is capable of really carrying weight at European level.

The issue is to work for European solidarity; we must rebuild it. All the powers that attack our rights use these divisions. We must find concrete forms of solidarity to overcome the difficulties, to use the experience of European movements, not to let anyone think: we're glad we are not Greeks.

The alter-globalist movement has remained West European. It is possible to win over in the East. We must not accept the idea that part of our continent is a colony. We must use what is happening in the East as enrichment.

For a common front, one of the essential subjects is democracy. Without it there are no social rights etc. One of our problems is in building a democratic front is that of political credibility. Loss of confidence produces disasters. The parties can only renovate themselves if they accept to "share" power.

The next stage is Florence + 10. It is a contribution to recreating a common field. There is no way out of the crisis without asserting that Europe is polycentric (this includes relations with the Maghreb — North=West Africa). A homogenous Europe cannot be a progressive Europe.

The questions coming from the floor of the meeting were essentially about the relevance of terms like "radical Left", divisions over the European question, the challenges the Left must take up in Europe, the fronts, the ELP and the 2014 European elections.

**Haris Golemis:** Regarding the term "Radical Left", the words can have different meanings according to the context. We must not make an issue of the choice of a name to describe our Left (radical Left). A new political object must be built first and we can talk about broader coalitions afterwards.

Democracy: the most anti-democratic parties in Europe are the centre-Right and centre Left parties, because they hide their real programmes and change them six months after an election on the pretext that the markets don't accept their programme. It is not sectarian to refuse to work with such parties.

Syriza was subjected to enormous pressure to enter into a government of national union.

**Raffaella Bollini:** What is essential is to propose an alternative vision and not to hold on to a radical name. The problem is to break the "single thought" that brings together the conservatives and the social democrats. In Italy, it is impossible to build a movement equal to the situation.

Democracy/Social Rights: social rights are perhaps the priorities but they cannot be defended outside democratic processes.

**Pierre Laurent:** The implications of the term "Radical Left" differ considerably according to the country. It is preferable to think about political representations as they appear to the citizens and about the manner in which they can encourage popular dynamism. An alternative is both a different content and the path taken to achieve it. Are we really filled with determination to become the majority? We must not compromise on what is just and necessary and we must work on credible ways and means. In France, the present political majority would not have existed without the dynamics created by the left Front. However, the present government will carry out a harmful policy if we let it do so. Thus the problem is to revive popular dynamism. We must, therefore, be clear about the rejection of the budgetary pact and take initiatives to get the people moving, although they have not taken up a position of opposition to the government.

Rather than saying that the European issue has always divided us, it is preferable to raise the question in another way and ask ourselves whether differences on Europe are enough to erase what we have in common. If we wait to be agreed on everything we are doomed to impotence. We must overcome the division of forces whose "common" factors are broadly more important than the "different" ones.

The ELP is a young party, founded in 2004, but it already has a history. We cannot build the future by erasing the past. Some Communist forces have decided to be in it, others not. The same is true of the non-Communist parties. We are in the middle of

a process and have not yet reached the dreamt of organisational structure. This is a permanent building site, without taboos ahead, so that this force can advance permanently.

Starting from there, how can we get organised on the ground. There is much to do. In Belgium, the Left Front aroused much interest. However, in that country, there is no comparable political force. Working structures have, therefore, to be imagined, however without preconceived recipes and without imposing anything from outside.

Setting up an area of dialogue is an idea to look into more deeply. An initiative is already under way to enable the creation of a working network of members of national parliament in Europe. We could also cite, as an example, the common resolution tabled at the National Assembly in France and the Bundestag in Germany. However, this remains in an embryonic state.

The European elections are a task ahead of us; they must be prepared for at the next ELP Congress. This is a complex question since the GUE/NGL Group includes member parties that have not joined the ELP. We must take into account national political logics, which are all different. At the last elections there was, nevertheless, a common platform. It is also necessary to fight against abstention, which is particularly high in European elections.

There are urgencies, but we are obliged to combine urgency with sustainability. The problems will not be resolved as rapidly as we would wish. An ambition, therefore, is necessary even if it is difficult. One example will be the European citizen's initiative that is being prepared. However time is needed to enable the political processes to consolidate.

**Élisabeth Gauthier:** The situation in Europe is not stable. We must, therefore, anticipate and, at the same time accumulate the maximum of forces, to build up the bonds between us, to build a social movement to foil nationalism. We must also be capable of raising problems in class terms to avoid them being raised in terms of opposition between populations, between nationalities.

Here too, Syriza is a good example.

We are in a building process but we must prepare for going even further.

For the 2014 European Elections we must stress yet more the mobilising themes throughout Europe and arouse a great political discussion. There is room for this at the social level, but we must also talk about politics and include it in our building of a process of setting things moving.

As far as Fronts are concerned, the concepts differ in accordance with their national histories, but the idea of a front enables the mobilising of a variety of actors — trade unions, social movements, political organisations and networks like Transform! We are seeking to advance in this direction with the process of the “*Alter-summit*”. There are urgencies but also challenges that require new forms of action and assembly. We must not forget that cultural cooperation like transform! can embody and contribute to creating a common progressive Europe

## Workshop

# Is the Eurozone Sustainable?

*Report by Peter Fleissner, transform!at, Austria*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Elena Papadopoulou* (Economist, Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Greece)
- *Euclid Tsakalotos* (Professor, University of Athens, MP of SYRIZA, Greece)
- *Mariana Mortagua* (Economist, Member of the National Commission of Bloco de Esquerda, Portugal)
- *Birgit Mahnkopf* (Professor, Berlin School of Economics & Law, Germany)

The result of the three presentations was that the Euro is under high pressure and the answer of all three contributors was that the Euro is not sustainable, more precisely, the Euro could crash 50 per cent probability within the next half year.

In the following you will find short summaries of the three presentations.

### 1. Euclid Tsakalotos, SYRIZA:

The Euro is not sustainable. Euclid asked the rather academic question if the situation in Euroland could be conceptualized as “chicken game” (i.e. a game theoretical concept describing two youngsters in cars approaching each other from opposite directions on a road. The loser is the one who firstly turns his car around to prevent a crash. If no one deviates from his path the crash will become inevitable. The probability of a crash increases over time). But is this adequate? His answer was: No.

In more detail: Wrong ideas haunt the Eurozone: Monti said in June 2012 the Eurozone would have only a few weeks to solve the crisis. Merkel, on the other hand, countered that any softening of austerity would be counterproductive. More radical positions are afraid of contagion. If one member state leaves the Eurozone (for the time being built on fixed exchange rates because of same currency units), the remaining zone would run into the risk of flexible exchange rates, thus leading to the exit of other countries. Problems of moral hazard (= not fulfilling the obligations of austerity) will assure that fiscal irresponsibility will continue. From this point of view throwing Greece out of Euroland would be rational. The discipline of debtor countries would be increased. The “markets” would react appropriately. So in this perspective the June Council of the EU could be seen as a success. In the terms of “chicken game”: Both sides did not let their cars crash, and were engaged in mutual compromise to save Euroland.

SYRIZA’s strategy before the June election could also be seen as a chicken game, but this would imply, if both sides behave well, that there is no crash and the situation could go back to normality (= balanced and sustainable growth). But this consequence is not true for Greece. The market economy is no stable and sustainable entity. Without government intervention, recession will be self-enforcing. In contrast to the other parties SYRIZA confronted Euroland with a different economic model, which could have relieved some of the pressures on Greece.

Finally the question is asked why social democrats (SD) could not use the crisis of 2008 to launch a political comeback. The answer: SD could no longer apply the former social-democratic economic model, because now SD is alienated of its social base which was related to areas of the welfare state (health care, education). Now the welfare state is partly privatized, so the basis for SD is no longer there.

Back to the “chicken game”: Negotiating with Germany and the Troika is no chicken game. The future of the Eurozone cannot be explained by the concept of a chicken game, but rests on new social and political forces willing and able to impose a new political and economic foundation. There is a less than 50% chance of the EURO being here next year.

## **2. Mariana Mortagua, Portugal:**

There is the myth that public debt in Portugal exists because we lived above our means. The public discourse in the EU states that salaries are too high, and social spending is too much. One should sacrifice oneself to save the others. The interventions of the Troika would therefore be inevitable.

Public debt is really a problem, but Portugal’s debt was for many years (1996-2006) always below German levels, only later it surpassed 100 per cent of GDP.

On the myth of high wages: If one looks at statistics, one can see that wages in Portugal and Greece were rather around the average of the wage levels of the Member States. More revealing is a comparison of the current account balances. The German and the Portuguese balances look nearly like mirror images. The surplus in Germany corresponds to deficits in Portugal. The Portuguese deficits have been partly financed by the surpluses of Germany. High public debt is not a consequence of high social welfare, but a result of rentism.

Three options in this context seem possible for the future:

- 1) New social regime – neo-conservative, undemocratic.
- 2) New European Monetary Union with a left turn based on solidarity, growth and employment mechanisms.
- 3) The end of the euro. This could also be used as blackmail for the debtor Members, but this would not be sufficient for a sustainable solution.

## **3. Birgit Mahnkopf, Germany:**

She believes that the Eurozone is not sustainable. The next step must be a political one to have a fiscal-, transfer- and tax-union. A breakup of the EU within the next six months is a possibility. She insists that no country is willing to leave the Eurozone, because this would mean economic suicide. Even after the leave debt would still be there.

Yes, Germany would like to see the Eurozone surviving, because Germany profits from the geopolitical dimension of the EU. Germany has to pay in any case for the EU, with or without the Euro. It is just a question of good or bad credit risks. In the case one country leaves Euroland, German currency will be revaluated with higher risks for exports, in the other Germany has to

take the risk of higher interest rates. For the moment Germany pays low interest rates for her public debt, and debtor countries pay much more. With Eurobonds the risk could be shared.

One way to have a more balanced situation would be to increase wages in Germany. Minimum wages could be implemented by Law as the price for keeping up the EU. But the German Left is too weak to change the situation, although political opposition is increasing, also in Germany.

Facts to be kept in mind: there is no end of the crisis in sight. Levels of private and public debt are unsustainable in some countries. All member states are expected to reduce their debt burden, but the consequence will be an overall decline of growth rates and a general tendency towards recession. The deeper roots of euro-crisis are here to stay; imbalances of financial markets will not go away. Growth model of the EU is in a structural crisis, this means on one hand, a few highly productive countries, and to the non-productive countries excess capital flows back.

The global economy feels increasingly spill-over effects of the euro-crisis, this could fight back.

It is difficult to assess the situation, because of the following uncertain factors:

- Fiscal consolidation is unclear,
- European Central Bank's intervention is not for sure
- A devaluation of Euro is difficult to predict (30% devaluation would help Greece a lot)
- National fiscal sovereignty is not decided
- Demo- or autocratic perspectives are possible
- The political situation in Germany or France is unclear
- Enforced exit of members is possible
- Taking bonds of the banking sectors not yet decided.

Conclusion: The EU for the moment is only capable to act in a neo-liberal direction. Their coordination mechanisms do not work in an emergency situation, radicalisation is to be expected. There is the danger of right wing to come up, like in the 1930ies. In the previous period the EU did not cost anything, but in the future it will. One has to compare pros and cons of the EU and decide what to do. Even the best-case scenario will have its problems. More power has to be passed to Brussels. Only if there is a chance to have democracy on the EU level there is a chance for democracy on the national level.

Alternative scenarios:

1. Leaving priorities to the market
2. Continue to some sort of economic government on the EU level
3. Re-establish EU, restrict lobbies, strict regulation of financial institutions.

### **Discussion:**

One **German** participant is sceptical about the future of the EU. In her opinion EU is a bureaucratic system, with a tendency towards privatisation and deregulation. "Neoliberal" is the buzz-word. The new strategy 2020 of the EU states explicitly that the crisis should be used as an opportunity to improve global competitiveness.

A **Danish** participant does not believe that there will be a democratic structure in the EU to get rid of the debt. One should investigate who are the owners of the debt. One should ask: What will happen if Portugal stops paying the debt?

Another **Dane** demands more integration on the EU level. This will bring stability. For the moment Denmark does not see a sustainable path of integration. With the existence of the Euro the Eurozone will stick to the neoliberal path.

One member of **Synaspismos** asks who the decision makers are. Are these bureaucrats? We should analyse who are the people deciding. In Greece the bad protagonist was not the Troika, it is the big business and the politicians. The government has decided in favour of austerity measures.

A **Canadian** participant informs, that in Canada there are transfer payments to sub-regions. It works well. The EU could do similar transfers. For the moment transfers in the EU are not well coordinated and are too small. In fact, we should talk more about democracy, not about currency. On this level we could solve problems of competitiveness. We need two strategies: one with and another without the Euro. In both cases we should be prepared because even with a national currency we will not automatically have socialism.

Another **participant** compares the EU to Florida, mostly related to retired people and institutions. An alternative growth model is needed.

### **Reactions of the panellists:**

**Euclid:** Before 2000 the Eurocrats believed their own rhetoric. They expected a continuously growing economy and borrowed more money, because they did not see any problem to pay back the debt. The situation changed. What are now the options to pay back the public debt?

- 1) Rich should pay
- 2) Everybody will pay indirectly by allowing inflation
- 3) Nobody. One could also grow out of the debt, as the US did.

In the 1970ies a national road to socialism was seen, but this option failed with the financial crisis. The Left in Europe failed everywhere. There was no left input proposal against neoliberalism. Now the question is if there is a new road to socialism, with a space for democracy. The Left has to be very careful with her proposals. If they fail they will stay out of power for decades. The Right will go with an authoritarian solution for the nation state, not for solutions on a supra-national level. Breakup of the Euro will help conservative forces, because of a fall back to the nation state. The Left should discuss that. Also from history we learn that a national road to socialism is very difficult, a supra-national solution would be better.

**Mariana:** It is necessary to cancel part of the debt, because e.g. interest payments are as high as spending for health. But on the other hand we should pay back part of the debt because the welfare state was built with capitalist money. Mariana prefers not to leave Euroland. The political struggles are on the national level; therefore one has to fight there. More integration is needed, but the centre of decision is still the nation state.

**Birgit:** In the discussion disagreement with the fiscal union came from Denmark and Germany, understandably. If the EU will break down, in 5 years time from now there will not be German firms in Europe, but Chinese. In the early 1990ies Birgit was against the monetary union, but she was blamed for being nationalist. Now it is different, because one needs to keep up integration. Now it is necessary to give control away from the national level to the EU. Political changes are needed, maybe in other European countries, if not in Germany. If crisis will reach Germany this will also be a disadvantage for the rest of Europe.

A **Danish** participant states that Denmark and Sweden are both not members of Euroland. But there is a difference between the two. Denmark is more or less bound to the euro, while Swedish crown floats freely. Problems can be handled in both cases. For Denmark not exit strategy is needed in the crisis, they could decide on their own on possible exchange rates. He confirms that class struggle is on the national level. What to do if protectionism comes up? Charter for another Europe is needed.

A **German** participant states that it is a wrong debate to contrast national vs. EU levels. One has also to debate the functions of the military forces (EGF) of the EU because they could possibly act against member states.

A **Danish** participant said we should diminish the power of multinationals, but it will not happen. European cooperation is a good idea, but there are many members to agree. A decision against the Euro and a financial union should not be seen as nationalistic. Iceland is a good example of leaving the crisis. Within Euroland the political possibilities for the Left are low.

### **Reactions of the panellists:**

**Birgit:** Trade policy is situated on EU level. Working group 133 is a train away from national governments. Birgit proposes to do a fair assessment of pro's and con's of the European Union, followed by a referendum. Another Europe would be interesting, but in the comparison one has to include all the factors.

**Mariana:** To propose a different Europe does not mean to defend the existing EU, and austerity measures are not only implemented because of EU pressure (as the right wing would like). Mariana proposes to analyse theoretically a situation where we will leave the Euro. What will happen? Trucks will transport the new currency, banks will be closed, and maybe invaded; the army will protect the banks. There would be many contradictions even for a left government, exports will possibly go up, but salaries have to be frozen to stay competitive. Who should decide the relative size of salaries in other countries?

**Euclid:** Giving the failure of left governments in the past, what could be the strategy of the Left on the national level for the future? What will happen when Portugal will have lower wages because of devaluation of their currency? Is this a left-wing proven result? Isn't this a capitalist strategy? The Left should discuss while we failed in the past.

## **Workshop**

# Beyond Capitalism (I): Changing our countries, Europe and the World

## Speakers

- *Guido Liguori* (Head of International Gramsci Society, University of Calabria, Italy)
- *Costas Douzinas* (Professor, Birkbeck University of London, UK/Greece)
- *Marga Ferre* (Member of the Secretariat for the Program of Izquierda Unida, Spain)
- *Christiane Reymann* (Journalist, EL-FEM, Die Linke, Germany)

## Workshop

### The Geopolitical Effects of the Crisis

#### The shift in global power relations and an open window of opportunity

Report by *Anna Striethorst*, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Brussels

## Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Marie-Christine Vergiat*
- *Claudia Haydt* (Member of the EL ExB, Die Linke, Germany)
- *Erhard Crome* (RLS, Germany)
- *Valter Pomar* (Sao Paulo Forum, PT, Brazil)
- *Vivi Kefala* (Professor, University of the Aegean, Greece)

What global long-term struggles and interests lay behind the day-to-day conflicts that we commonly hear about in the news? The seminar “Geopolitical Effects of the Crisis” did not only tackle this question but presented as well strategic options for the Left.

Moderator **Marie-Christine Vergiat**, MEP of Front de gauche, focused on the attempts of the European Union to outweigh the consequences of the crisis by expanding even more aggressively into the global markets. Vergiat highlighted how the EU imposes a neocolonial policy of creating free trade areas and liberalizing public services in local economies. Thus, as economically stronger actor, the EU easily gains advantage over these economies.

**Valter Pomar** from the Sao Paulo Forum considered the strategic options of the left against the background of a dispute between two capitalist centres, the traditional centre US-EU-Japan and the emerging centre China-BRICS. Pomar presented three possible scenarios: 1) The very likely scenario of a continuous hegemony of capitalist countries at the current state, 2) the rise of a stable social democratic model of state capitalism which combines capitalism with social care and 3) the construction of socialism beside capitalism as the most desirable scenario for the left.

In Pomar’s view, both the power shift from the United States to Asia and the crisis of the neoliberal model have opened a small window of opportunity for the left, in particular for the left governments in Latin America. Yet, in order to accumulate the necessary forces for a transformation these governments must within a scarce period of time mobilize their populations against the worsening of living conditions and continue their path of regional integration.

**Erhard Crome** from Rosa Luxemburg Foundation set the interests of the contemporary European powers and their behavior in regional conflicts in the context of larger history. On the grounds of André Gunder Frank’s thesis of a power shift back to Asia – after four centuries of hegemony by Europe respectively the United States – Crome ascertained a European defense struggle against the “end of the predominance of the white man”. He stated, however, that the capital fractions in the European nation states will continue to prevent the European Union from effectively pursuing their common imperial interests.

Spotlighting the global intentions of Germany Crome described the current debate among German bourgeois thinkers: In their view the country today is at the same time too big and too small. This means that Germany is considered as both a geopolitical and a geo-economic power but its global role depends on the success of European integration – the EU is seen as a kind of “homeland for world politics”. One symbol of Germany’s new confidence was her decision to abstain from the vote on the UN

resolution on Libya: In an obvious break with their traditional foreign policy the German government voted for the first time not together with the United States, the United Kingdom and France but with Brazil, China and Russia.

**Claudia Haydt**, member of the EL Executive Board, analysed the military efforts that the United States and the European countries invest in order to secure their political and economic dominance in a transforming world order. Responding to the pressure that the crisis has put on the national military budgets, they aim to maintain their military capacities by the means of *Smart Defense* and military integration via *Pooling & Sharing*. However, no significant reduction of military spending or arms exports has taken place so far.

Haydt highlighted two developments that the left should be concerned about. One is the continuous strength of interventionism in the security debate. So did the NATO summit in Chicago even take the disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Libya as model for future interventions. These interventions shall for instance build on the experience of establishing flexible alliances. The other unsettling development is the attempt to decrease democratic control: Political decisions on security are turned into technical ones so that (just as with the automatism in the ESM) politicians remain no longer responsible for the outcome.

**Vivi Kefala**, professor at the University of the Aegean, addressed the effects that the crisis has on the European Union as an actor in foreign policy. She stated that the shift in global economy has already led into an unavoidable confrontation that the EU can only face if it transforms into a highly integrated political power. However, the opposite will happen: The rising tensions within the EU and the austerity obsession of the stronger European economies will create a Europe of two speeds. As a consequence, the level of political coordination within the union will be weakened.

The impact of this will be particularly visible in the European neighborhood. Here, the EU can no longer fulfill a hegemonic role and it has especially failed in its approach towards Northern Africa and the Middle East. For too long the EU has only focused on limited economic cooperation in exchange for what it perceived as stability and security. This approach has never created sustainable integration and it now goes down as the crisis has significantly reduced the capital for investments in the Southern Mediterranean. Further, the different interest spheres of the EU member states have prevented a cohesive policy towards the region. As a result, today the EU is neither capable of a common response to the Palestine question nor to the Arab Spring.

The debate centred on the geopolitical rise of Asia and in particular China, which had been mentioned in all speeches. **Moritz Kirchner** from DIE LINKE drew attention to recent developments in the Shanghai Cooperation, suggesting that the left should widen their focus beyond Western security alliances such as NATO. German Student **Sarah Nagel** questioned the premature perception of China as an empire since the Chinese elites themselves see the country not yet as a global but merely as a regional power. However, she stated that it is the Western perception of China as a threat that needs to be taken into consideration, too.

**Sigfrido Ramirez** from Transform! Brussels raised the issue of cooperation between the BRICS, asking about the stance of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) towards the Chinese development model. Valter Pomar stated that the PT has established a close relationship with the Chinese KP, and though the PT does not adhere to the Chinese social and economic model, they share the attitude that development is only possible with a strong state.

## Workshop

# EU – Integration or Disintegration?

*Report by Inger Johansen (Member of the EL Secretariat, transform! Danmark, Denmark)*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Walter Baier* (Coordinator of transform! Europe, Austria)
- *Inger V. Johansen* (Member of the EL Secretariat, transform! Danmark, Denmark)
- *Margarita Mileva* (Member of the EL Secretariat, Co-President of the Bulgarian Left, Bulgaria)
- *Theodoros Paraskevopoulos* (Economist, Greece)

Today the issue of integration or disintegration of the EU is not an either or – but rather a question of both and. It takes place at the same time.

The present situation in the EU and Europe is a lot more complex and contradictory than previously. Former divisions and viewpoints are no longer sufficient to deal with the present situation.

Formerly there were sharp divisions on the radical left with regard to this issue: Between those political forces of the left in favour of EU integration and those opposing it.

This said I wish to state that both I and my political party the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark belong to those who always opposed the EU and EU integration as it was our analysis that the EU project could not be reformed – with institutions and treaties built on the interests of Big capital and financial capital – which would have to be removed to create progressive and social change.

In Scandinavia there was a welfare state – now undermined. In other parts of the EU and Europe you have to understand our position on the EU from this fact. We were convinced that EU integration would be detrimental to the lives of ordinary people/the broad working class. I.e. it would undermine the perspectives of our party to build democracy and socialism.

### **Integration can become disintegration – left alternatives**

Today the EU is in crisis and the EU leaders are using it to further the centralization and integration of the EU – and in particular of the Euro zone countries – at an extremely fast pace. Over the heads of parliaments and populations. An authoritarian integration of the EU – geared to restrict democracy even further - and to promote austerity and neo-liberalism.

It is also obvious that due to the neo-liberal character of EU integration with an extreme focus on tight budgets, there is a potential risk that this integration could lead to a collapse of the Euro or even of the EU, as the economy stalls, unemployment soars and other social ills continue to grow coupled with increasing social discontent and upheaval. Because of this development the EU is as well losing legitimacy and so are mainstream political parties.

We are in a situation of upheaval with no chance of return to the old times.

### **Left alternatives**

This means that the radical left is faced with a much more important task than that of discussing their different points of view concerning integration or disintegration of the EU: that of building democratic and social alternatives in Europe and globally. We all agree that the disorderly collapse of the EU – without any alternatives - would be extremely dangerous, and particularly detrimental for those socially not so well off in our societies.

This task is becoming even more important as the Social Democratic parties and other centre-left parties – formerly promoting Keynesian reforms – obviously give up their former roles as defenders of social justice and equality as they adopt EU neo-liberal austerity.

In some EU countries the radical left has gained a huge increase in popular support as a consequence of EU/IMF imposed austerity and the fall of traditional Social Democracy - unbelievable a few years ago – as ordinary working class people lose confidence in Social Democratic parties as they switch to anti-social neoliberal policies at a time of crisis.

### **Greece and Denmark**

This is not a general tendency yet within the EU, but it is remarkable

that in EU countries like Greece and Denmark, which are extremely different, some tendencies are similar. Despite the fact that Denmark is not hit very hard by the economic crisis, and the deficits are small compared to those of Greece. Denmark is not a Euro zone country and there is no real mobilization of people. The gains of the Danish radical left are of course on a much smaller scale than those in Greece – but still an increase in votes to the Red-Green Alliance according to the opinion polls from 6.7% at the elections last year to nearly 14 % a couple of weeks ago. This is remarkable.

In Denmark, however, this is due in particular to the experience with the new Social Democratic-led government, in power since September last year – as it has broken its election promises and parts of its government programme in which it promised more social welfare. Contrary to this, the government has made its most crucial economic and labour market reforms with the right wing of the Danish parliament and not with its parliamentary supporting party the Red-Green Alliance, which the government depends on. The latest deal with the right wing on a tax reform cut transfer payments to the weakest in our society in order to be able to reduce the taxes of the more well-to-do. The deals made with the right wing are seen by the public as anti-social and contributing to increasing the social gap in society.

But unlike in Greece people don't link these anti-social reforms directly to EU policies – they blame the government.

This has also led to turmoil inside both the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist People's Party – SF - both government coalition partners, as they have dropped from 24.9 % and 9.2 % respectively in the elections last year to barely 17 % and 5 % recently.

Although the Social Democratic parties have pursued neo-liberal policies before – this is not new - they seem to be faced with making the hard choices now, as even moderate reform within the EU is becoming difficult with the huge number of EU policies and treaties being put into effect aimed at restricting budgets and cutting public deficits.

The more integration of the EU, the more neo-liberalism and the more difficult to change the situation by democratic means.

This means that change will have to come about by some sort of confrontation/confrontational politics.

### **Old divisions influencing the building of left alternatives**

However – although the old divisions on the left regarding EU integration are no longer the same - they still seem to play an important role in our analysis and understanding of developments and in the choice of policies when building alternatives. Unfortunately as this also contributes to preserving some of the old divisions on the left regarding tactics especially – whereas the radical left seems more united today strategically.

The left should find a way to bridge some of these difficulties, as there are now much more important issues at stake.

### **3 examples of divisions and how to change them**

Here are 3 examples of how these divisions still disturb our outlook and cooperation and so also weaken our efforts to unite and develop tactics and strategy together.

1.

It is obvious that the left is divided on whether to develop policies that primarily seek to reform the EU/the Euro or seek to break with EU. Sometimes the distinction between these two can be small – as even proposals for example for Keynesian reform sometimes break with neo-liberalism. Both sides would join together to put forward such demands.

As a concrete example of differences of opinion concerning reform can be mentioned proposals to reform the Euro or the ECB, which are extremely difficult if not impossible for the left opposed to the Euro to support, as they do not break with the fundamentals of the Euro as such, and thus do not break with the inherent neo-liberalism of the Euro and the EMU.

2.

There is also a perception among those in favour of EU integration to see opposition to the EU as a rightwing issue.

But the Danish experience is that opposition to the EU is mainly a leftwing issue. On the broad left only the Social Democrats or parties close to the Social Democrats have a different view.

The Red-Green Alliance never had a policy with regard to the EU to favour disintegration – but for some years it had a policy of rolling back the EU or of dissolving the EU – but not disorderly without any alternatives. As a matter of fact alternatives were being developed.

However a different problem seems to have arisen from the huge focus of the European radical left on EU integration and reform of the EU, which we have seen over the last 20 years: A kind of EU centrism seems to have developed –helping keep up barriers between the left within EU and outside the EU. There seems to be some kind of continued division between Western and Eastern European left parties.

With the present effort by the EU leadership to integrate if not the EU – then the Euro zone, we could risk developing one more barrier between the left parties within the Euro zone and those outside.

So this is a problem that needs to be tackled very consciously by the European left parties. It needs redirection and internationalisation of policy making, as it seems furthermore also to have had the effect that cooperation between the European left parties and left parties internationally has not grown to be as strong as it should.

International cooperation and coordination between left parties is of the utmost importance to develop at a time of deep global crisis when common left alternatives are desperately needed.

3.

Among Social Democrats especially but also on the radical left and in bourgeois parties an “ideal of Europe” or a “dream of Europe” has for long been the basis of their adherence to EU and EU integration.

With the deliberate attempt to intensify neo-liberal EU integration as we are seeing today, this easily becomes a trap to strengthening neo-liberalism.

It is very important that this dream of Europe is redirected to no longer supporting EU integration but to support the development of democratic and social alternatives of the radical left in Europe and globally.

## Workshop

# Beyond Capitalism (II): Changing our Countries, Europe and the World

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Catherine Samary* (Professor, University of Dauphine, France)
- *Yiannis Miliotis* (Professor, National Technical University of Athens, Member of the Political Secretariat of Synaspismos, Greece)
- *Mariana Mortagua* (Member of the National Commission of Bloco de Esquerda, Portugal)
- *Marina Albiol* (Local MP of Izquierda Unida in Valencia, Spain)

## Workshop

# A million Signatures for a European Public Bank

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Jean François Gau* (Responsible for the EL Citizens' Initiative, France)
- *Pierre Laurent* (President of the EL, National Secretary of PCF, France)
- *Judit Morva* (Monde Diplomatique, Hungary)
- *Stelios Pappas* (Member of the Central Political Committee of Synaspismos, Greece)

## Plenary

# United We Stand

### Presentations

- Moderation/Introduction: *Natassa Theodorakopoulou* (Synaspismos, Greece)
- *Pierre Laurent* (President of the EL, National Secretary of PCF, France)
- *Alexis Tsipras* (Vice-President of the EL, President of Synaspismos, President of the Parliamentary Group of SYRIZA, Greece)
- *Aurélie Trouvé* (Co-President of ATTAC France)
- *Alessandra Mecozzi* (International Secretary of FIOM, Italy)
- *Elisabeth Gauthier* (transform! Europe, France)
- *Felipe Van Keirsbilck* (CSC Union, Belgium)
- *Gisela Notz* (EL FEM, Germany)

## Workshop

# The Crisis of Democracy and the Rise of Authoritarian Statism in Europe: The Actuality of Nicos Poulantzas

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Haris Triantafyllidou* (Political Scientist, Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Greece)
- *Bob Jessop* (Distinguished Professor, University of Lancaster, UK)
- *Konstantinos Tsoukalas* (Professor emeritus, University of Athens, Greece)
- *Sia Anagnostopoulou* (Professor, Panteion University, Greece)

### Workshop

## European Trade-Unions: Are They Up to the Challenge?

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Lia Fragkou* (Autonomous Intervention, Greece)
- *Aleksandar Todic* (International Secretary of SLOGA, Serbia)
- *Carmen Domínguez* (Comisiones Obreras, Spain)
- *Christian Pilichowski* (CGT, France)
- *Alessandra Mecozzi* (International Secretary of FIOM, Italy)

### Workshop

## “We are the 99%”: Emerging Social Actors in the Crisis

Report by *Veronique Sandoval*, *Espaces Marx*

### Speakers

- Moderation/Introduction: *Yiannis Bournous* (Member of the EL Executive Board, Member of the Central Political Committee of Synaspismos, Greece)
- *Stavros Panagiotidis* (Syntagma Square, Member of the Central Council of the Youth of Synaspismos, Greece)
- *Esther Lopez Barcelo* (Indignados, Local MP of Izquierda Unida in Valencia, Spain)
- *Adriano Campos* (Movimento 12M, Portugal)
- *Christa Wichterich* (Journalist, sociologist, feminist activist, Germany)

During this workshop, which was held on Saturday afternoon, several political actors – members of the European Left Party (Yiannis Bournous, member of the Central Committee Synaspismos, Stavros PANAGIOTIDIS, member of the Central Committee of Youth Synaspismos, Esther Lopez BARCELO, elected regional Izquierda Unida in the region of Valencia, Adriano CAMPOS, a member of the Movement of May 12) and a German sociologist Christa WICHTERICH feminist journalist, and a leader of the communist party of Israeli ) shared their experiences of spontaneous social movements that have emerged in the country during the years 2009 to 2011. Having described the process of mobilization, as well as the characteristics of these new actors, their slogans and their vision of collective action, they have attempted to analyze the obstacles encountered in the essential convergence of social movements with the political parties of the left but also opportunities for both parties when convergence does occur, particularly in Greece.

Who are these new actors?

In Greece, Spain, Portugal, but also in Israel and to a large extent in Germany, it is mainly unemployed, young precarious called ‘no-future’ and young people looking for a job, non graduates and without family support ‘disappointed by their experience of real life’. According to Armando Steinko, “most of them, however, were from families belonging to the middle class and not to the most popular”. It should be noted also the special case of local populations struggles in Germany, to defend

public services (a railway station) or the quality of their sleep (thus opposing the construction of an airport). Young people, responsible for the first public event in which it was asked to participate through a call on Internet launched by a few of them, were joined, from the second event or the second day of occupation, by civil servants, retirees shocked by police repression that followed.

All these movements are also characterized by the possibility that they show to mobilize very quickly, without using known personalities, thousands of people, for immediate identification of the population with their slogans: the rejection of precariousness and education policy, which young people are the first victims, but also their protest against police repression and requirement of direct democracy: “We, the unemployed, precarious .... will assume ourselves our own future” (slogan of the Portuguese protesters). In Greece they were 100 in May 2009 in front of the Spain Embassy but 3.000 in front of the National Assembly a few days later. In Portugal, calling on the Internet they are only 4 young ‘apolitical’, but they mobilize 3000 people down the streets to demand more democracy. In Israel one in seven inhabitants are mobilized to respond to a call on Internet for a one-off event on housing, calling for ‘social justice’.

Everywhere, you find a critique of neo-liberal democracy and claim for a direct democracy, the political system being made responsible for the crisis. Concerning relations with unions, they vary from one country to another according to the security they brought (or not) to the austerity policy implementation. The increasing absence of ‘legitimacy’ of neo-liberal democracy, the crisis of ‘representation’, the loss of trust in political parties, don’t prevent their confidence in collective action. In these mobilizations they want to express themselves and then, take consciousness of their power to pressure. But in most cases, they get satisfaction on a particular point – e.g. a law against short-term work contracts in Portugal – but not concerning their requirement of democracy, they influence public opinion but don’t change the policies implemented.

Opportunities for convergence with leftist political parties which doesn’t prove to be obvious.

How do you explain that in Portugal, a few weeks after an event that brought together several thousand Portuguese calling for more democracy, this is not the right but the left which grew strongly in the elections? “How can you ask for more democracy, but do not ask for less capitalism?” Portuguese comrades are not far to find the explanation insectarianism, populism or “the supposed ‘apolitical’ protesters”.

However, as pointed by Armando Steinko, “there is a difference between a political party, which is a shared space..., and a social movement in which the entire population converges and does not automatically evolves to the political Left.”

In addition, as claiming to be ‘spokesperson for street claims in the institutions’ (Esther Lopez, eluted from Isquierda Unida), leftist parties are part of a political system which, according to Stavros Panagiotidis, is made responsible for the crisis by these emerging actors.

But we cannot ignore either, takes care to emphasize the sociologist Christa Wichterich that “this form of autonomous organization ignoring the hierarchy between the political and social movement, these movements which are not ‘anti-capitalist’, but put forward secondary contradictions (such as corruption) and so contribute to the debate” are not without problems for leftist political parties.

They force them to change their way of thinking and acting.

This is particularly so when “starting a fight for a minimum wage, movement leads to a demand for more respect for the dignity of work and the worker”, when he reveals “a new culture of social protest” demanding the creation of new public spaces.

The application of a direct democracy is equally difficult to understand. “What do they want? The removal of representative democracy? Consensus which means ignorance of minorities?” (Joana, a young PCP activist)

Yet these emerging actors need political parties.

Because “the distance from political movements which allows them to mobilize quickly on a slogan sometimes radical as ‘social justice’ or even ‘revolution’ is also their weakness, explaining the lack of political expression of their demands” (a leader of the Communist Party of Israeli).

As explained Stavros Panagiotidis, “they need this instrument, not only to organize their struggle in duration, but also to answer crucial questions that arise, and thus give them a political identity beyond multiple social and cultural identities that are theirs, and to enable them in the same movement, become collective intellectual, crystallize political conclusions and find a political outlet for their struggles”.

Their participation in these movements

For Stavros Panagiotidis, it must be “full and effective”. This implies a “new political culture, the awareness that the end of the crisis depends on the conscious intervention of the people to defend public space”, “decentralization” of the organization, an

ideological intervention, “starting with the dominant ideology in an attempt to overthrow”, but also practice intervention “to allow relations with trade unions and political contacts with the representatives.”

According to Yiannis Bourrous, this Synaspismos involvement in the movement of Syntagma allowed him to “find a way into the action at some crucial questions to the left for a long time, as the dilemma of “violence or nonviolence?” which was answered by civil disobedience and the defense of democracy, the question of “unity or diversity of the movement” which was answered by the diversity combined with the non-partisan consensus in decision-making, the secondary contradictions (to which non-economic requests were assimilated), the opposition’s “reform or revolution” which has been replaced by the need for radical reforms paving the way for social transformation and that of the opposition “market or state” replaced by social control in new ways”.

Questions still remain open as conditions of continued movement in time or that of the relationship between direct democracy and representative democracy.