

TO TELL THE TRUTH IS REVOLUTIONARY¹

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Following the imposition of the third Memorandum of Understanding on 12 July 2015 – despite the triumphant result of the Referendum some days prior – the democratically imperative elections of last September (which, however, were organized with the leadership ignoring the decision of the Central Committee to hold a Congress during the same month) and the party’s split, the second “new SYRIZA” government (unfortunately, again, in coalition with the right-wing party, ANEL) is confronted with serious problems.

People were frustrated and disappointed by our inability to abolish the Memoranda and implement an anti-austerity program within the Eurozone – the platform on which we were elected in a historic victory in January 2015. Nevertheless, the popular classes renewed their confidence in SYRIZA in the elections held in September, when the party committed itself to administrating the neoliberal Memorandum in a much fairer way than the approach taken by the Right and the Social Democrats, the so-called “Extreme Center”. Today, we can see the difficulties and the limits of their efforts. The party’s President spoke about the optimism of the will. However, communists and leftists know that this goes together with the pessimism of the intellect.

It is true that government members are negotiating hard with the Quartet, that certain social policies are being implemented in order to bring respite to the poorest sections of the population, that – given the extremely tight financial restrictions – a serious effort is being made to increase efficiency, reduce waste and fight corruption in various fields, such as healthcare, education, social welfare and public administration, that the effort to face the acute refugee problem is permanent and unrelenting – despite some serious strategic, but also administrative mistakes – and that there are also other achievements that are included in the Prime Minister’s report.

¹ This is the complete speech given by the author at the SYRIZA Congress.

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However, the Memorandum, which is not the government's "property" – and this must be continuously emphasized through all avenues – but was imposed on it by a "coup", is unrelenting and the guardianship merciless, as we have been claiming since 2010. This is the reason why the popular alliance (workers, the precariat, the traditional and new petty bourgeoisie, the unemployed, the young, but also pensioners and peasants) that voted us into government twice seems to be distancing itself from SYRIZA, a situation that is also reflected in the opinion polls. Unfortunately, unemployment continues to be very high, part-time employment – offering very low wages that condemn working people to poverty – continues to increase, social expenditure is very limited, privatizations continue, pensions have been cut, and arbitrary police discrimination does not seem to be declining.

So what can we do?

- a) Understand that without ridding ourselves of the institutions' guardianship, without writing off a large part of the non-sustainable debt and without a radical decrease in primary surpluses, which could bring a relaxation of austerity, any effort to counter the catastrophic social effects of the harsh Memorandum, i.e. the pauperization of the people, is doomed to failure. Under the present circumstances, a "left success story" is impossible.
- b) Given the need to break free of the existing situation through a "war of positions", which does not exclude ruptures, alliances at a geographic level (with the countries of Southern Europe) or at a political level (like the dialogue with the Greens and Social Democracy, which must be selective and careful in order not to disrupt the relation of SYRIZA with the parties of the European Left and other left European political forces, the left wing of social democratic parties, as well as trade unions and social movements of various countries) are useful and the government rightly tries to forge them, provided they do not exhaust the party's European strategy. However, these policies should, of course, be incorporated into a general plan of the party and the government, with the latter not acting without prior notice of and in

consultation with the former, something that does not usually happen – and not only where this issue is concerned.

- c) The “Refoundation of Europe”, referred to in the Theses, is a basic prerequisite for SYRIZA’s efforts to result in potential success. The foundations of the actually existing neoliberal and undemocratic European integration are being shaken to their core, and its collapse is highly possibly in an event that would echo the collapse of so called actually existing socialism that took place in 1989, this time under the hegemony of populists and the extreme Right. This applies much more to the Eurozone, which was problematic from the outset. It is a widely held view that the European Monetary Union is not sustainable, unless it is changed radically, an eventuality which is rather improbable under the present balance of forces in Europe.
- d) However, no credible plan for the “Refoundation of Europe” can exist without a discontinuity with the past, without ruptures and – why not? – disobedience to the diktats of both institutional (Commission, ECB) and para-institutional (Troika or Quartet, Eurogroup, independent competitive commissions in every EU country according to the Five Presidents’ Report, etc.) organs – ruptures that are not disorderly and isolated, but internationally organized and coordinated – without the strengthening of democracy and the respect of national and popular sovereignty. If we are to achieve all these, it is necessary that the radical Left – united if possible – plays a dominant governmental role in more than one country, mainly in some of those larger in size, and that it is based on a robust national and European movement.
- e) Within the framework of the Party of the European Left, SYRIZA can pursue a policy of “enhanced cooperation” with Southern Europe’s parties of the radical Left, aiming to promote common policy proposals and coordinated interventions in the Council of the European Union (mainly at ECOFIN), at the Eurogroup, but also within European movements. Cooperation for interventions at the European institutions can be extended on an ad hoc basis for specific issues (i.e. the refugee problem, CETA and TTIP, etc.) as well as to parties of other political families that are in government.

- f) SYRIZA should participate in the debate developing throughout Europe on the issue of the Eurozone and generally of European integration, i.e. in public events organized either by groups and initiatives friendly to or which are tolerant towards SYRIZA (e.g. the Party of European Left, GUE/NGL, transform, Alter Summit, even Yanis Varoufakis' pro-European DIEM 25) and/or hostile to it (e.g. PLAN B). This is the only way not to lose its necessary contact with the movements that are developing in Europe and that attract many young people. Our continent is very angry and in a state of turmoil, and we should not leave the populist and extreme Right to benefit from this situation.
- g) Given that the conflict with institutions will continue in the future and for an unspecified period, while developments in Europe and the stances of some EU countries' governments – mainly that of Germany – towards Greece are anything but predictable, we must be prepared for any eventuality.
- h) Finally, I support the view that we should not govern at all costs, but only if we can really defend popular interests – to whatever degree we can do this under the suffocating blanket of the Memorandum. Given that the future lasts a long time, SYRIZA should be a strong, democratic party of the radical Left, with tendencies and currents, one that does not depend on the charisma of its leader, but that steadily aims to achieve the social transformation of Greece and Europe, even if it is out of government.