

COALITION OF THE RADICAL LEFT
MAIN POINTS IN THE OPENING SPEECH
OF SYRIZA'S PRESIDENT
ALEXIS TSIPRAS
TO THE PARTY'S SECOND CONGRESS

The Congress' critical questions

1. Is an exit from the Eurozone a left, radical and progressive proposal today?

“Greece’s exit from the euro was not and is not a progressive plan. There is no doubt that our criticism of the decision for Greece to enter the Eurozone was well grounded. **An exit, though, especially after five years of our national resources being plundered in order for the country to remain in the euro, would mean additional equivalent plundering and in fact instant. At the same time this would lead to the loss of the popular classes’ deposits in the banks.** This was the eventuality we were faced with. And this - despite the fact that it constituted the insistent option of a minority in our party, which acted as a party within a party – **was not a left plan; was not a radical plan. It was Germany’s Finance Minister Wolfgang Shauble’s plan.** And have no doubt: the consequences of a national fallback and a possible exit from the single currency would not be blamed on Europe or the institutions or the country’s old political system. It would be blamed on the Left itself, and not only the Greek Left. And this would constitute a strategic defeat of historic proportions.”

2. Is there a point the Left opting for, claiming the government in unfavorable circumstances, particularly in circumstances of default and fiscal asphyxiation?

“There is no doubt that you don’t choose the political timing – it chooses you. And to a high degree, SYRIZA is a child of necessity and rage against

the devaluation of the country's political establishment and the pillaging of the national wealth induced by its policies. Obviously it would have been better if the first time Left had come under some other circumstances; not of default and asphyxiation, but of high growth rates both of the Greek and the global economy. However, it is no coincidence that History never remembers the Left at such moments. The Left is remembered at hard times to protect the weak and prevent catastrophe."

3. Is it realistic and feasible to exit the crisis with a plan of social protection and productive reconstruction while you are obliged to be in a fiscal adjustment program?

"The answer is not simple but I'm deeply convinced it's an affirmative one. And, of course, the theoretical possibility is not the same as the practical implementation, the transformation of such a possibility into political action. However, we ought to consider what we have achieved over these twenty months of our administration; what's more, what we have achieved given the historic redistribution of wealth and power in favor of the capital that took place during the catastrophic five-year period 2010-2014, when fiscal adjustment reached approximately 65 billion euros; GDP shrank by 25%; unemployment soared to an inconceivable 27%; wages went down dramatically and the labor market was completely deregulated under the pressure objectively exerted by the reserve army of the unemployed; the welfare state was demolished and social protection was eliminated.

In these tragic conditions of economic disaster and social desertification, we have begun to implement a policy of redistributing the burdens in favor of the working classes as well as a policy of diminishing disparities:

- We have already passed, are implementing and continuously expanding a program against the humanitarian crisis, which has reduced the impact of absolute poverty on more than half a million fellow citizens.
- We are implementing a program to tackle unemployment, which gives emphasis on the observance of labor rights and has created

thousands of eight-month jobs with distribution of resources in favor of the beneficiaries and not of the Vocational Training Centers.

- We have dealt with the problem of 2.5 million uninsured people, legislating their free access to the National Health System.
- We have reinstated thousands of unconstitutionally laid-off workers of the public sector.
- For the first time in decades, we have managed to have all the schools open normally and all the books distributed in time.
- We have managed to defend the public system of social security ensuring its redistributive character in conflict with both the institutions and the opposition, which wanted to apply the zero deficit clause on pensions and base the system on the capitalization principle.
- At the same time, we use all our means to deal with the injustices created by the abolition of EKAS [Pensioners' Social Solidarity Benefit], which we did not succeed in averting.
- We passed the 100 installment arrangement that relieved hundreds of thousands of workers and self-employed professionals who gave their daily battle under the burden of accumulated debts.
- Finally, we have started to tackle the problem of extensive large and medium-sized tax evasion, which can be clearly seen in the outperformance of revenues both in 2015 and 2016.

These political interventions don't just have a specific social significance but they also create – directly or indirectly – the conditions for the support and boost of private consumption and purchasing power of the weaker social strata, and put the economy on the path to recovery. These are the very policies that have contributed to the de-escalation of unemployment by 4% during our administration. This is the very dividing line between a left policy of burden redistribution and a neoliberal policy that wants growth on the wreckage of labor and society.”

4. Who are we going to go with? Is there room for alliances and common ground for convergence between the Left and the forces of European social democracy and the Green Left?

“We need to understand that behind the economic crisis, the refugee crisis, and the security crisis that our continent is scourged by, there is a multilevel and complex political conflict taking place in all fronts; a conflict that takes on various forms and constantly reshuffles forces. It is the conflict between the North and the South, the Center and the Periphery, as well as the conflict that defines it: the internal battle in the interior of every country between the forces that want a Europe of social cohesion, equality and solidarity and the forces that either overtly opt for the division and closure of Europe or fuel division by fanatically supporting extreme neoliberalism and austerity. Here the fronts are volatile and the dividing lines are not always clear and certain beforehand. What is clear and certain, however, is that the outcome of this multilevel conflict will determine Europe’s course in the 21st century. Europe will develop into a Union-fortress, with national fallbacks and a deepening of the gap between the North and the South, or into an open Union of economic cooperation, democracy and converging economies.

Greece and SYRIZA must play and are already playing a leading part in this battle, as a pioneering political force; both in the establishment of a European South front, which will vehemently put forward the issues of economic convergence and peripheral disparities in Europe, and in the establishment of a parallel front of left and progressive forces in the whole of Europe. **This front will set the following as its main goals:**

- **To tackle and subvert austerity policies**
- **To tackle the rise of the far-right**
- **To prevent national fallbacks**
- **To prevent the conversion of Europe into a Union-fortress**
- **To resolve the refugee crisis with solidarity and hospitality**
- **To peacefully resolve differences in the wider region of the Middle East, which has been turned into a powder keg by imperialist interventions and the rise of Islamic terrorism.**

We are perfectly aware that these are no easy goals. We are perfectly aware that in order these we need – as a precondition – to form an alliance with political forces of different origin and tradition. **But SYRIZA, the only party of the Radical Left in government, can't be limited to the role of sidekick and spectator. With the political and theoretical arsenal of the Left, we should aim at an approach and convergence with the European Social Democracy as well as with the Greens, always keeping in mind the limitations of such convergences and the dangers involved in such a venture."**

Labor issues

To the second review "we go with the most powerful and nonnegotiable weapon, which is the European *acquis* itself. But we also go with positive claims. **To defend the institution of collective bargaining and to fight for measures of protection and reinforcement of the workers' bargaining power."**

A message to the lenders

- "The July Agreement is clear. As we observe it defying the cost, we expect and demand that our partners do the same. *Pacta sunt servanda*, as our German friends would say. **There is no excuse for the delay in the specification of the measures necessary for the debt relief and for Greece's inclusion in the quantitative easing program – the country that needs this more than any other.** The Greek economy has been on a recovery trajectory these last months. A nod to the international investing community would be enough to turn this recovery into a take-off. But the nod given by the constant clash and disagreement between the institutions is exactly the opposite of what we need. And this cannot go on. It is unfair. And not only to Greece. The Greek crisis must at last come to an end and come to a definitive end. Europe can't take any more shocks and turbulences, particularly before critical elections

- in France, the Netherlands, Germany, before the referendum in Italy. The Agreement must be observed by everybody. The Greek people have suffered. They deserve reward and vindication.
- And I want to make this clear: the vague advice “do your homework and we’ll see..” cannot be accepted. We have scrupulously observed the Agreement and will continue to do so. The second review will be completed in time and will be less hard than the first one. But at the same time the measures for the debt reduction will be set too. At the same time, we’ll be included in the quantitative easing program. There is no “we’ll see”. At the same time.”
 - And I would like to assure you that we are not feeling at all alone in our effort. Some others should be feeling alone. Our request for realization of immediate measures concerning the debt – as agreed - is now supported by most of our discussion partners. Both in the international community and in Europe. Even in the German Parliament itself. Because the forces that want a postponement *ad calendas graecas* of the Greek issue are not a majority even in the German Parliament. On the contrary, the majority are the forces that support the need for an immediate solution to the problem. The forces of the Social Democrats, of the German Left and the German Greens. And this must be immediately understood by the current German government.”

Society

- The rescue of the socially weak from plunder and destruction of an unprecedented intensity is the condition for any plan that wants to have a horizon of social transformation. And for us this remains our strategic horizon.
- 21st century socialism, which is our vision and strategic horizon, cannot come closer in circumstances of total destruction of the popular strata.
- In circumstances of globalized economy, we should fight step by step for the change of the balance of power. Both in Greece and in

Europe. And this is our plan. We forge alliances and slowly but steadily change the balance in Europe.

- Deepening of the discredited democracy, enforcement of legitimacy on everyone without exceptions, as well as combating corruption and maladministration.
- Law of the state the great commitment and long-standing demand of the Left for proportional representation.
- Law the vote at 17.
- Greek citizenship to all the immigrants' children who are born in Greece and partake in Greek education.
- Civil Partnership for same-sex couples.
- We have started the social dialogue for the necessary constitutional revision, the democratization of all the state institutions and the promotion of forms of direct democracy.
- For the first time, after 30 years, during which collusion thrived, the unregulated television landscape has been put in order. After 27 years of deliberate unaccountability, the auction for TV licenses has now been made real. We have set the basis for the legitimacy and regulation of the television landscape. We have proven that we are not shaken by names or frightened by blackmails. And the most important is that we have secured 258 million euros for the state treasury, 80 million of which has already been deposited and is all being channeled into actions of social protection. For the support of crèches and public hospitals.

The Left

- We have proven that apart from the Left of constant review of what caused the defeat, apart from the Left of escape and national isolationism, there is also a Left that is not afraid of going into the fire, of fighting for the defence of popular interests.
- The Left that does not hesitate to take on its historic duty, to carry on its shoulders the responsibility for the exit from the crisis with society standing on its feet.

The party and the government

- The party should check the government but the party members, as well, should check the party and its leadership.
- Strategy for government policies cannot be drawn up somewhere outside the party, without the party. As strategy cannot be drawn up in certain ministries in ignorance of the elaborations of the party's sections and EPEKE [Committees for Production and Control of Government Work].
- Physical presence of the political leadership and senior members in the party's organs.
- The party needs a single political center: a Central Committee that will be elected on the basis of the party's real needs and a Political Secretariat that will be the only political center and will function with a sense of responsibility and with political solidarity.
- Everyone should realize that it is more important for a party member to be an elected member of the Political Secretariat – that is, of the leadership – rather than be a government minister.
- Ministerial positions are not allotted or granted to anyone on a permanent basis.
- The party should not only support the Government but also judge it.
- We should set again the basis for opening up to the Greek people; particularly to the social groups whose interests we represent.
- We don't just want a mass party, but a mass party of the Left. The formation of the great bloc of the Left. Where the party members will not derive their authority from SYRIZA but SYRIZA will derive its authority from its members.