

With the Greek Left for a Democratic Europe!

Friday 8 June 2012, by [BALIBAR Etienne](#), [Collective / Multiple signers](#), [SKOUMBI Vicky](#), [VAKALOULIS Michel](#) (Date first published: 4 June 2012).

STAND with the GREEK LEFT for a DEMOCRATIC EUROPE!

It is clear that the responsibility for the chain of events that in a mere three years has plunged Greece into the abyss lies overwhelmingly with the parties that have held office since 1974. New Democracy (the Right) and PASOK (the Socialists) have not only maintained the system of corruption and privilege they have benefitted from it and enabled Greece's suppliers and creditors to profit considerably from this system while the institutions of the European Community looked the other way. Under such conditions, it is astonishing that the leaders of Europe and the IMF, posing as paragons of virtue and economic rigor, should seek to restore those same bankrupt and discredited parties to office by denouncing the "red peril" supposedly represented by SYRIZA (the radical Left coalition) and by threatening to cut off food supplies if the new round of elections to be held on June 17 confirms the rejection of the "Memorandum" clearly expressed in the elections of 6 May. Not only does this intervention flagrantly contradict the most elementary democratic norms but it would have terrible consequences for our common future.

This alone would be sufficient reason for us, as European citizens, to refuse to allow the will of the Greek people to be thwarted. But something even more serious is at stake. For the last two years, the European Union, in close collaboration with the IMF, has been working to strip the Greek people of its sovereignty. Under the pretext of stabilising public finances and modernising the economy, they have imposed a draconian system of austerity that has stifled economic activity, reduced the majority of the population to poverty, and demolished labor rights. This neo-liberal style "rectification" programme has resulted in the liquidation of the economic infrastructure and the creation of mass unemployment. Achieving this required nothing less than a state of emergency not seen in Western Europe since the end of the Second World War: the state's budget is dictated by the Troika, the Greek Parliament nothing more than a rubber stamp and the Constitution repeatedly bypassed. This stripping away of the principle of people's sovereignty has gone hand in hand with the humiliation of an entire country. Here, indeed, it has reached an extreme but it is not restricted to Greece. The peoples of all the member countries of the European Union are utterly disregarded when it comes to imposing a system of austerity that runs counter to any economic rationality, combining the interventions of the IMF and the ECB in support of the banking system and imposing governments of unelected technocrats.

On a number of occasions the Greeks have made clear their opposition to a policy that destroys a country while pretending to save it. Innumerable mass demonstrations, seventeen days of general strikes in two years, and innumerable acts of civil disobedience, such as the movement of the "Indignant ones" in Synatagma square have shown their refusal to accept the fate to which they have been consigned without any consultation. And what was the response to this cry of despair and revolt? A doubling of the lethal dose and of police repression! It was then, in a context where the governing parties had lost all legitimacy, that it was decided that a return to the ballot box was the only way to avoid a social explosion.

Now, however, the situation is perfectly clear: the results of the 6 May elections have left no doubt about the mass rejection of the policies imposed by the Troika. Faced with the perspective of a

SYRIZA victory in the 17 June elections, a campaign of disinformation and intimidation has been launched both inside the country and at European level. Its aim is to prevent SYRIZA from being seen as a trustworthy political interlocutor. Every possible means is used to disqualify it, beginning with the application of the label “extremist” to place it on a par with the neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn. SYRIZA has been accused of every vice: fraud, double speak, and irresponsible and infantile demands. If we were to believe this vicious propaganda, itself based on a racist stigmatisation of the entire Greek people, SYRIZA poses a threat to freedom, the world economy and the European project itself. In such a case, it would be the joint responsibility of Greek voters and of our leaders to stop it in its tracks. Brandishing the threat of exclusion from the euro and other forms of economic blackmail, an attempt to manipulate the people is under way. It is a strategy of shock by which the dominant groups seek to use every means at their disposal to make the vote of the Greek people serve their interests, which they claim are ours as well.

We, the signatories of this text, cannot remain silent in the face of this attempt to deprive a European people of its sovereignty for which the elections are the last resort. The campaign to stigmatise SYRIZA and the threat to exclude Greece from the Euro zone must stop at once. It is up to the Greek people to decide their own fate by rejecting any diktat, by rejecting the poisons that its “saviours” have administered to it and by engaging freely in the forms of cooperation indispensable to overcoming the crisis, together with other European peoples.

We, in turn, affirm that it is time for Europe to understand the signal sent from Athens on 6 May. It is time to abandon a policy that is bringing an entire society to ruins and that declares a people unfit to govern themselves in order to save the banks. It is urgent to put an end to the suicidal drift of a political and economic construction that transfers government to “experts” and institutionalises the omnipotence of financial operatives. Europe must be the work of its citizens themselves in the service of their own interests.

This new Europe which we, like the democratic forces that have emerged in Greece, wish and intend to fight for is that of all its peoples. In every country, there are two politically and morally antithetical Europes in conflict: one which would dispossess the people to benefit the bankers and another which affirms the right of all to a life worthy of the name and that collectively gives itself the means to do so.

Thus, what we want, together with the Greek voters and SYRIZA’s activists and leaders, is not the disappearance of Europe but its refoundation. It is ultra-liberalism that provokes the rise of nationalisms and the extreme right. The real saviours of the European idea are the supporters of openness, and of the participation of its citizens, the defenders of a Europe where popular sovereignty is not abolished but extended and shared.

Yes Athens is indeed the future of democracy in Europe and it is the fate of Europe that is at stake. By a strange irony of history, the Greeks, stigmatised and impoverished, are at the front line of our struggle for a common future.

Let us listen to them, support them and defend them!!!

First signatories:

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Michel VAKALOULIS, philosopher and sociologist

The appeal has already been signed by more than 170 personalities, including:

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Michel AGIER, anthropologue

Tariq ALI, historien

Tewfik ALLAL, écrivain, président du Manifeste des Libertés

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Elmar ALTVATER, philosophe

Charles ALUNNI, philosophe

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P.S.

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<http://www.myonlinepetition.com/petition/699/With+the+Greek+Left+for+a+Democratic+Europe!/>

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