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Europe

# For a mass movement of European solidarity with the Greek people and active resistance to austerity policies

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**Why does European public opinion find the misfortunes of the Greek people so moving? And why, day by day, does this feeling grow more broad and deep and transform itself into the will to act, to do something to show solidarity with the Greek population? The answer is not difficult to find: if the Greek drama moves and even revolts people, it is because they no longer perceive it as external to their concerns, as an isolated case, as an exception to the rule. In sum, it is because they recognize it for what it always has been since it began, as a test case conceived of and imposed by force by those on top, of using the Greek people as guinea pigs to test the endurance and resistance of the victims of their policies before generalizing these policies throughout Europe!**

So it's no surprise that the parallels between today's Greece and Spain in 1936 strikes a chord that is taken up by so many political and social actors in Europe. The resistance of the Greek people in 2012 is a barrier to extending capital's brutal assault against the working people of Europe, just as the resistance of the peoples of the Spanish State was the barrier in 1936 to extending the brown plague "and the outbreak of war" throughout Europe and the world! If the Greek dam is torn down, there will soon be a flood throughout almost all of the European plain. ...

The fact that there are more and more European citizens, labor unions, political parties and social movements who view the Greek tragedy as emblematic of a new historical era of neoliberal capitalism, is an absolute novelty with enormous consequences. In effect, this means that the tide is turning in Europe, despite and against official propaganda, supported by the corporate media, which have continued to preach (for two years now!) that "the Greeks are the ones entirely at fault." But, it means most of all that the more and more consistently elements of European society are now ready and willing to give their feeling of solidarity with the Greek people a new meaning and content: that of making the Greek resistance to capitalist barbarity the FRONT LINE of a more universal common struggle, which affects them directly because it is their own fight against the same policies of the same class enemy!

The conclusion is obvious: the ingredients are now in place to attempt to build a mass movement in Europe both in solidarity with the Greek people and against the austerity policies practiced by the leadership of the EU. But, one asks, what movement are we speaking about? What might be its extent and its duration, its structures and its radicalism?

First of all, we believe that this movement could and should be built based on the following fundamental characteristics: to be European, that is, to extend throughout the entire continent, to be unified, "generalized," to be a mass movement of long duration and one that has stable structures at the base of our society (grass-root self-run committees and federated). We explain it more carefully here...

a) The requirement to be completely united is based on the recognition that the current austerity policies are aimed at a wide range of social sectors, threatening at least some of them with a real extinction! In sum, although there may be an exaggeration in the claim of our good U.S. American friends who speak for the famous 99% of society, the fact is that we have never seen so many people objectively and sometimes even "subjectively" united against a class enemy that is not only a common enemy "and this is very important" but is perceived as such. It is exactly this "community" of interests that will build the profoundly unified nature of this movement, avoiding sectarianism and "avant-gardism." The "all together" must dominate.

b) It is obvious that such a (rather unusual) situation is helping to create a mass movement as what is involved is the will to mobilize and regroup all the real victims of this veritable "social war" of capital against the overwhelming

majority of the members of society. This feature is accentuated by the fact that the reactionary offensive is no longer only "economic" but it goes beyond this to the social, political and even cultural and ethical issue. In short, it is global, posing truly existential dilemmas to society and its members.

c) Since these austerity policies hit "albeit with different intensities" all European populations, it is obvious that this movement can and should be European and should be organized as such, otherwise it is doomed to failure from the start ...

d) The long duration of this movement is made compulsory by the fact that it is supposed to confront a long-term global offensive of the enemy class, which leads us into a new historical period. This idea of a long duration is reinforced by the perspective "a completely real one" that the Greek crisis will drag on without finding a short-term favorable outcome for one or the other camp.

e) The logical consequence is that the European mass movement must prepare itself for a long struggle, plan ahead and invest in a long-term project. This also means that it must have structures that are not ephemeral but that have continuity and stability.

f) The movement must also be "generalized," that is, not simply be a partial resistance (e.g., purely economic) to the reactionary offensive that is "global," being at the same time economic, social, cultural, patriarchal, environmental and even "philosophical" and ethical. It must then regroup under one roof all organizational resistance, trying "and this is not a given in advance" to provide a common denominator in order to unify in the struggle.

That said, it remains to define more precisely what role the European movement in solidarity with the Greek people should play. First, we must say that this solidarity with Greece is not a burden but an asset in the construction and development of a mass movement against austerity policies. The resistance of the Greek people moves "and rightly so" millions of Europeans and in so doing it greatly facilitates the realization that the Greeks' misfortunes illustrate the fate that the powers of this world reserve for us all. By first reacting with their guts while seeing the Greek drama, wage-workers and other European people immediately become aware that they are also part of this drama, across national boundaries and so-called "national" interests, going beyond and in spite of official propaganda. In short, they discover in action the common interests of those on the bottom and internationalism, something of paramount importance in times of systemic crisis so cataclysmic that it reawakens all the "demons" (nationalism, racism and even ... wars) of the 1930s among many factions of the European bourgeoisie ...

However, we must admit that this feeling of solidarity is not eternal, it must be nurtured day by day to be sufficiently strong and widespread in order to "maintain and nurture" a solidarity movement of long duration that must be expressed by rank-and-file committees throughout Europe. Then we ask: Are the prospects of the Greek "laboratory" conducive to maintaining and nurturing interest, emotion and especially the feeling of active solidarity aroused by this Greek drama?

The answer to this crucial question is a categorical yes. Yes, they can guarantee all this for two reasons: a) because everything indicates that there is no way out of the Greek drama as neither of its two protagonists (those above and those below) has the means to crush the other. This leads us to the conclusion that the current unstable equilibrium could drag on, leading either to a deterioration of the situation, or to explosions that are violent but short-lived. In any case, we can be sure that the Greek crisis is here to stay and dominate EU (and international) news for a long time. b) Because the anger of the vast majority of the Greek population is so profound that the rest of this story will be punctuated by events and explosions of all kinds, capable of keeping European public opinion mobilized in favor of the fighting Greek people. There will certainly be "down times" but they will not be able to lower the tension of the solidarity movement, especially since we can already foresee that there will be more and more similar "events" in other European countries.

In addition the Greek crisis and the struggle of the Greek people offer quite naturally the demand and the central slogan of the European movement: to reject and repudiate the debt that is not ours and to totally reject all austerity measures and plans. And all under the very ethical banner of the fundamental notion of "state of necessity" of international law that requires that the basic needs of human beings has absolute priority over the satisfaction of creditors. In the current situation of growing polarization between those who advocate submission to austerity in the name of debt repayment and those who categorically reject this extortion, these two demands or slogans should by and large be sufficient at least to launch this European movement. And all the more so because everyone (social movement, trade union, political force or individual) would be free within the movement to defend and put forward their own ideas for the content and form of the struggles within the framework, obviously, of sharing and defending the two central demands described above.

Obviously, the acceptance of a programmatic framework with so few details is not without risk or danger for the development of this movement. However, these risks must be accepted and assumed in good conscience because what matters most now is that there is the largest possible cluster of forces of any kind behind the clear and concise rejection of the austerity policies of European reaction. This maximum regroupment is imposed by the absolute urgency that there appear on a European level a mass force capable of competing with our common class enemy that is so well established, organized, experienced, coordinated, overwhelming armed and above all determined to do battle with the plebian masses. Here the time factor plays an important role and to ignore it would be to leave open the door to the movement being crushed: we cannot afford the luxury of waiting for the famous "objective conditions" or the mysterious "subjective conditions" to mature, because the class enemy is not biding its time and is already launching a frontal attack that we must defend ourselves against before it's too late. That is to say, before the popular movement is defeated and loses all capacity for resistance "perhaps" for decades! ...

This then is a first draft of a project concerning the urgent need to build and expand in Europe the response of those on the bottom to the war that the Holy Alliance of the EU, the IMF and big capital are already hurling against them. The discussion is launched. Time to move to deeds...

*Athens, March 13, 2012*