

## V. Programmatic Conclusions

We will now come to the programmatic conclusions of our study on Greece as an advanced semi-colony with specific features. This is not the place to elaborate a full Action Program for Greece which indeed is a crucial task in the present period. At this stage we will only focus on some specific issues which are directly related to tactics consequential to the class character of Greece.<sup>208</sup>

However, before we deal with specific tactical questions we need to repeat that contrary to the left-reformists – be it the KKE, LAE or others – the RCIT rejects the strategy of a popular front, i.e., the orientation towards class collaboration with a “patriotic” or “democratic” sector of the Greek bourgeoisie. The historic experience of both Greece and internationally has convincingly demonstrated that such a fraction of the bourgeoisie is a phantom, i.e., it exists only in the fantasy of political muddle-heads or willful deceivers. The only real home of capitalists is not a specific country but their profits. They will always subordinate “their” country to the interests of their personal business activities. In cases in which they temporarily “defend” their country, they will do so in such a way as to ensure that the working class is subordinated to their dictates and doesn’t harm its profits.

The illusionary hopes of LAE and others for an alliance with “national” sector of the Greek bourgeoisie are particularly absurd in a country like Greece. The Greek bourgeoisie has an extremely cosmopolitan character and has throughout its entire history served loyally as the local henchmen for imperialism.

Contrary to such a reformist dead-end, the working class in Greece, which is multinational, its composition having many migrants, must independently fight for its liberation. It must direct its struggle against the imperialist rulers of Greece, including their lackeys – the Greek bourgeoisie. The proletariat must strive to rally the urban poor petty-bourgeoisie as well as the small peasants in the struggle for democratic and anti-capitalist demands. Furthermore the working class must aim to closely unite themselves in the struggle with their class brothers and sisters in the region – i.e., the European workers and poor as well as those in the Middle East. The latter can play a dynamic role given the recent experience of the Arab Revolution starting in December 2010.<sup>209</sup>

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208 However, we refer readers once again to our numerous statements as well as to our pamphlet on Greece which include the elaboration of crucial elements for such an Action program. They can be read at a special subsection on Greece on our website: <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/articles-on-greece/>

209 For a closer examination of the contradictory development of the Arab Revolution we refer readers to numerous statements and articles which are published on our website in the subsection <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/>. The RCIT’s most comprehensive documents on this issue are the *Open Letter on the Arab Revolution* (October 2013, <http://>

## V.1 The Tactical Slogan of Greece's Exit from the EU

The RCIT considers the slogan of the country's exit from the EU as a necessary and indispensable part of a revolutionary action program for Greece today. Greece has always been a dependent and subjugated country in the EU. Contrary to the reformist illusions of SYRIZA and their friends in the ex-Stalinist *Party of the European Left*, by its very nature the EU is an imperialist institution dominated by Germany and France. This character cannot be reformed or changed.<sup>210</sup> Any substantial change in Greece's economic and social policy is impossible *within* the imperialist EU. Any such attempt by a Greek government – even a reformist one – would be immediately vetoed by Brussels. We have seen this when then-Prime Minister Papandreou (PASOK) dared considering the holding of a popular referendum on an EU-Memorandum in 2010. He immediately had to resign after massive pressure from Brussels. When the Greek people elected SYRIZA to head the government in January 2015 on an anti-austerity platform, or when they voted OXI against the Third Memorandum, the imperialist EU forced the government to trample on the popular will. Lenin's assessment of the imperialist unification of Europe is still valid: *"From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism – i.e., the export of capital amid the division of the world by the "advanced" and "civilised" colonial powers – a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary."*<sup>211</sup>

Naturally, the slogan for Greece's exit from the EU does not constitute an independent program nor is it a strategic goal. It is no more and no less than an indispensable tactic as part of a broader strategy: to liberate Greece from imperialist subjugation and to fight for an authentic workers' government striving for the expropriation of the imperialist and domestic bourgeoisie and opening the road to socialism. The RCIT rejects the national-reformist program

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[www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-on-arab-revolution/](http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-on-arab-revolution/)) and *Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Arab World: An Acid Test for Revolutionaries* (May 2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-arab-revolution/>)

210 On the nature of the European Union and the revolutionary perspectives we refer readers to several documents: Michael Pröbsting: *The EU Reform Treaty: what it is and how to fight it* (2008), in: *Fifth International Vol.3, No.1*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-reform-treaty/>; Michael Pröbsting: *Die Frage der Vereinigung Europas im Lichte der marxistischen Theorie. Zur Frage eines supranationalen Staatsapparates des EU-Imperialismus und der marxistischen Staatstheorie. Die Diskussion zur Losung der Vereinigten Sozialistischen Staaten von Europa bei Lenin und Trotzki und ihre Anwendung unter den heutigen Bedingungen des Klassenkampfes*, in: *Unter der Fahne der Revolution* (FAREV) Nr. 2/3 (2008), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/marxismus-und-eu/>; RKOB: *The European Union and the issue of the accession of semi-colonial countries*, 14.10.2012, in: *Revolutionary Communism No. 6*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/eu-and-semi-colonies/>; Michael Pröbsting: *The British Left and the EU-Referendum: The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism. An analysis of the left's failure to fight for an independent, internationalist and socialist stance both against British as well as European imperialism*, in: *Revolutionary Communism No. 40*, August 2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/british-left-and-eu-referendum/>

211 V. I. Lenin: *On the Slogan for a United States of Europe*; in: *LCW Vol. 21*, p.340

a la Costas Lapavitsas and the LAE-leadership.<sup>212</sup> The national-capitalist road is an illusionary dead-end. Lapavitsas & Co. do not understand that from the moment that a progressive government in Athens would start to nationalize the banks and impose a serious capital control, or if such a government would take serious steps to nationalize core sectors of the economy and use them to revitalize the economy, the capitalists would start to hide their wealth and to send it abroad. At the same time, the bourgeoisie would try everything in their power to sabotage such a government by launching a vicious media campaign against it and, if necessary, bring the army command into position for a coup d'état (as they have done so many previous times in Greece's history).

In other words, any serious intervention for a radical change of the social and economic policy will immediately result in a confrontation with the ruling class: either us or them. Either such a progressive government is prepared to fully expropriate the bourgeoisie and dismantle their state apparatus – or the ruling class will “dismantle” the progressive government.

Hence, the slogan for Greece's exit from the EU has to be raised in connection with slogans towards the expropriation of the monopoly capitalists in Greece. These slogans should call for a workers' and popular government of Greece and a socialist revolution in order to build a workers republic. *For an independent and socialist Greece!*

Likewise, this slogan has to be combined with the perspective of international class struggle with the European and Arab working class. Greek socialists should appeal to working class solidarity of their European brothers and sisters. The latter derive no benefits from the EU-Troika's blackmail of the Greek people. Quite the contrary, the workers in the rest of Europe suffer similarly from the reactionary austerity policy of the ruling class in the EU. Hence, such an internationalist strategy should combine the struggle for an independent, socialist Greece with the struggle for the *United Socialist States in Europe*.

There are socialists in Greece and internationally who share our position of the unreformability of the EU as well as the rejection of a national-capitalist road. They, however, do not support our tactic of supporting an exit of Greece from the EU since they believe that this would deflect the attention of the Greek workers from the need to fight for an internationalist, European perspective.

We believe that these comrades are mistaken. First, often such comrades are not entirely clear on the class character of Greece and either openly reject our position on Greece as a semi-colony or they leave this question unanswered.

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212 Costas Lapavitsas is a university professor and has been elected as a SYRIZA MP in January 2015 until he split together with his comrades in LAE in August 2015. He has elaborated his views recently in several interviews and articles like *To beat austerity, Greece must break free from the euro*, 2 March 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/02/austerity-greece-euro-currency-syriza>; *The Syriza strategy has come to an end*, 30 April 2015, <http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1967-costas-lapavitsas-the-syriza-strategy-has-come-to-an-end>; *Lapavitsas Calls for Exit as the Only Strategy for Greek People*, July 17, 2015, [http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=14278](http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=14278)

This however is a crucial for this issue since Marxists need to differentiate their tactics depending on whether they are dealing with an imperialist or a semi-colonial country. We support the resistance of oppressed people against their oppressor and, hence, defend semi-colonial countries against imperialist states (or alliances like the EU); however, we do not take sides in conflicts between two imperialist states or camps. Concretely this means that the RCIT differentiates its tactical position vis-à-vis remaining in the EU: We call for semi-colonial countries to leave the EU but, in the case of imperialist states, we take a defeatist position and neither call for remaining within or leaving the EU. This differentiation demonstrates by the way why scientific clarity is essential for Marxists: to have clarity when deriving tactics related to the class struggle.<sup>213</sup>

Second, such comrades implicitly support an Economist understanding of the democratic question. The struggle for democratic rights – for national liberation, equality of rights for migrants, women etc. – *never* deflects the working class from the strategic goals of its liberation *if* it is posed in a correct way, i.e., as part of a transitional program aiming for working class power. Concretely we remind these comrades that the struggle for a United Socialist States of Europe will *under no circumstances* advance via the institutions of the imperialist EU. It can and will only progress via the destruction of the EU as part of the struggle for socialist revolution in each European country and throughout the entire continent.

Such comrades point out that an exit of Greece from the EU without a socialist revolution would not eliminate the capitalist misery of the Greek people. To this we reply that this is the case with many minimum and democratic demands. Has it not often happened that when workers manage to win higher wages the capitalists soon make up for this by increasing the prices or by raising the intensity of labor? The Italian workers experienced this many times in the 1970s! Is it not the case that African countries experienced the continuation of misery after having won independence from the colonial powers? And is it not the case that the oppression of women continues even after they got the formal right to vote? But surely our critics will agree that only an ultra-left idiot can conclude from these facts that socialists should not demand higher wages, independence for colonies, or suffrage for women! It is the task for socialists to raise such minimum and democratic demands in such a way that they help the working class to mobilize its forces and to rally the popular masses around them, to weaken the imperialist enemy and the ruling class and to point to the road towards socialist revolution.

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213 See on this e.g. RKOB: The European Union and the issue of the accession of semi-colonial countries, 14.10.2012, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 6, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/eu-and-semi-colonies/>; Michael Pröbsting: The British Left and the EU-Referendum: The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism. An analysis of the left's failure to fight for an independent, internationalist and socialist stance both against British as well as European imperialism, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 40, August 2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/british-left-and-eu-referendum/>

## V.2 The Program for Complete Equality for Migrants

The struggle against Greece's subjugation by the imperialist EU must not deflect the socialists' focus on fighting against all forms of reactionary Greek chauvinism. Such chauvinism manifests itself in particular in two ways: oppression and racism against migrants and anti-Macedonian nationalism. The RCIT considers the national oppression and super-exploitation of one million or so migrants in Greece as a crucial issue for socialists and the whole working class.

Socialists in Greece must fight for full equality of migrants. Such equality includes full citizenship rights, equal wages for equal work, full access to social benefits, etc. Another important aspect of the revolutionary program of equality is the struggle for the abolition of the official state language. All languages should be treated equally. Migrants as well as other national minorities in Greece should have the possibility to receive education in schools and universities in their native language. The same rules should apply for courts, public administration and in the media.

Against the growing threat of fascist violence it is crucial to build armed self-defense units consisting both of migrants and the organizations of workers' movement.

Socialists should demand from the leaderships of SYRIZA, the KKE and all trade unions to mobilize the workers for the fight to implement these demands. It is important to support the formation of a revolutionary migrant movement. Equally the trade unions must be transformed into a multi-national, militant force which really represents the interests of the migrant workers.

Similarly, socialists should engage in serious solidarity work with refugees as part of the mass international solidarity movement which has recently emerged. They should oppose the imperialist border regime of the EU (Frontex, etc.) and call for open borders for all migrants and refugees. They should have the right to pass through the country or to stay as long as they want with all democratic rights. Socialists should oppose deportations and call for the dissolution of all deportation camps and all reception centers.<sup>214</sup>

At the same time socialists oppose the discrimination of Greek workers living abroad and fight for a similar program for equality.

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214 On the situation of refugees in Europe and the solidarity movement see RCIT: Throw Open the Gates of Europe to Refugees! Long live International Solidarity of the Workers and Poor! Down with the Imperialist Fortress EU! Advance the Arab Revolution to Build Workers and Peasant Republics! 15.9.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/refugees-are-welcome/>; RCIT: Europe / North Africa: Storm the Gates of Rome! Open Borders for Refugees! Stop the Imperialist EU-War against Refugees! No to the Preparations for an Imperialist Aggression against Libya! 22.5.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/eu-war-against-refugees/>

### V.3 The Struggle against Greek Chauvinism: The Macedonian Question

Another crucial issue for Greek socialists is their attitude towards the Macedonian question. In our opinion, it is the duty of socialists to oppose reactionary Greek chauvinism directed against the Macedonians as well as against the Muslim minority in Thrace. It is certainly true that today the Macedonian minority as well as the native Muslim minority in Greece are relatively small (respectively numbering 50,000 and 110,000 persons). However, the central meaning of taking a principled, i.e., proletarian internationalist, stand on this issue is that revolutionaries can only break Greek workers away from the ideological chains of their bourgeoisie, if they openly confront traditional chauvinism against the national minorities.

Leon Trotsky explained in a discussion with Greek supporters in 1932 when he became concerned that the latter did not resolutely support the Macedonians' right of self-determination: *"I would again like to raise the question of Macedonia and Epirus. So far as I understand, not much importance has been given to this question up to now. However, this question is very important for educating the Greek workers, for liberating them from national prejudices, for improving their understanding of the international situation in the Balkans and generally."*<sup>215</sup>

We can say without exaggeration that the Macedonia question has for Greek chauvinism the same importance which the Kosova question has for Serbian chauvinism. Both are a central part of the political DNA of the bourgeois state and its national ideology. Both have to be fought uncompromisingly as part of the struggle for the liberation of the working class and the oppressed in these countries.

Greek socialists have to wage a sharp ideological struggle against the reactionary myths about the supposed historical foundations for the claim that Macedonia belongs to Greece. As we have shown above, in reality Aegean Macedonia had a non-Greek majority when it was annexed by Greece in 1913. It only became a mostly Greek-populated region after subsequent governments systematically expelled most of the native population and settled in their place Greeks (many of whom were themselves refugees from Asia Minor).

The struggle for the Macedonian minority must include a number of essential demands. First and foremost they must support the Macedonians demand for being recognized as a national minority. They must call for full equality which includes the unconditional support for their demand to use their language in education as well as public administration, to use their Macedonian-language names if they wish to do so, to practice their religion in their mother language as well as their culture in general, to have equal access to the media (in their mother language if they wish to do so), etc. In addition, socialists should demand

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<sup>215</sup> Leon Trotsky: A Discussion on Greece (Spring 1932), In: Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1929-33), Pathfinder, New York 1979, p. 133

from the Greek government adequate compensation to the descendants of the expelled Slavic Macedonians families who today mostly live in the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria. Furthermore, Greek socialists must demand the official recognition of the Republic of Macedonia by its very name (instead of such ridiculous names like FYROM). Likewise, socialists should fight for full democratic rights for the Muslim minority living in Thrace.

Socialists should fight for autonomy and local self-government of those regions and areas with a strong Macedonian population as well as for the right of national self-determination of the remaining minority of Slavic Macedonians (including their right to secession). Of course, today it would be reactionary to call for the expulsion of the Greeks who are living for generations in Aegean Macedonia. The historic crime of the expulsion of the Macedonian people from Aegean Macedonia cannot be undone. But socialists certainly must not defend the “territorial integrity” of Greece against its oppressed national minorities. If the Macedonians who mostly live in Northern Greece close to the border of the Republic of Macedonia wish to separate, Greek socialists must unconditionally support this.

Such unconditional support for the right of self-determination of oppressed nations has also been the approach which Trotsky advised the Greek Marxists concerning the Macedonian question:

*“We merely say that if the Macedonians want it, we will then side with them, that they should be allowed to decide, and we will also support their decision. What disturbs me is not so much the question of the Macedonian peasants, but rather whether there isn’t a touch of chauvinist poison in Greek workers. That is very dangerous. For us, who are for a Balkan federation of soviet states, it is all the same if Macedonia belongs to this federation as an autonomous whole or part of another state. However, if the Macedonians are oppressed by the bourgeois government, or feel that they are oppressed, we must give them support.”*<sup>216</sup>

Unfortunately, this has been the approach only a few Greek Marxists. It is a particular shame that Synaspismos, which split with the KKE in 1991 and which was the predecessor organization of SYRIZA, supported the chauvinistic anti-Macedonian mobilizations in the early 1990s!<sup>217</sup>

To their credit, the KKE did not participate in these demonstrations. However, this cannot undo the fact that the Greek Stalinists were “patriots” for many decades and denied the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece. Naturally, they also did and do not support their right of national self-determination.<sup>218</sup> By this, the KKE rendered their loyal service both to

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216 Leon Trotsky: A Discussion on Greece, pp. 129-130

217 See Erik Eberhard: Revolution und Konterrevolution in Griechenland, AGM, Wien 2005, pp. 499-501

218 See on this e.g. Anastasia Karakasidou: Fellow Travellers, Separate Roads: The KKE and the Macedonian Question, in: East European Quarterly Vol. XXVII, No. 4 (Winter 1993). On the history of the Communists approach to the Macedonian question see e.g. Joseph Rothschild: The Communist Party of Bulgaria. Origins and Development 1883-1936, Columbia University Press, New York 1959;

the Greek ruling class as well as the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy since the latter supported the anti-Macedonian stance as part of their struggle against Tito's Yugoslavia. Given the collapse of Yugoslavia as well as of the USSR, the KKE has now managed to accept the existence of unspecified "minorities" in Greece. However, their reactionary patriotism has not changed in substance. In the KKE's programs of 1996 and 2013, the Macedonian or Muslim minorities are not even mentioned. It is only logical that they also refuse any support for these national minorities' right of self-determination. Consistently, in its 1996 program the KKE committed itself to "*defending the country's territorial integrity against the new imperialist world order,*" echoing the reactionary propaganda that Macedonian claims to Aegean Macedonia would be part of an "international conspiracy against the Greek nation."<sup>219</sup>

Against the KKE's opportunist adaption to Greek chauvinism, all authentic Greek revolutionaries will support the excellent declaration of Pantelis Pouliopoulos, the first General Secretary of the KKE and historic leader of Greek Trotskyism in the 1920s and 1930s:

*"Whoever refutes the existence, unresolved until today, of a national Macedonian question in Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian Macedonia, is without a doubt a lapdog of the bourgeoisie. Whoever refutes the historical liberation movement of the Macedonians, is either ignorant and must learn the history of that movement and its national heroes, or is again a lapdog of one of the three oppressing bourgeoisies."*<sup>220</sup>

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As we already stated, all these demands and tactics have to be applied as part of a revolutionary action program. This means a program for socialist revolution, i.e., the armed insurrection of the working class in Greece and throughout Europe. In raising this or that tactic, revolutionaries should always agitate for the organization of the workers and oppressed so that they do not rely on the bureaucratic apparatus which controls the trade union as well as the bourgeois workers' parties like KKE or SYRIZA. Hence it is crucial to argue in all struggles for the formation of *action committees in all workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, universities, and villages.*

The struggle for such a program as well for its application in individual issues is hopeless if it is not undertaken by an organized force of authentic Marxists. This is why the RCIT considers the formation of a revolutionary party as the most important task in the struggle against the imperialist subjugation of Greece as well as for the liberation of the working class and oppressed. Such a party must stand in the tradition of Lenin and the Bolshevik party as well as

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Stephen E. Palmer, Jr and Robert R. King: Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question, Archon Books, Hamden 1971

219 Programme of KKE (1996), <http://interold.kke.gr/Documents/docprogr.html>

220 Pantelis Pouliopoulos: Communists and the Macedonian Question (May 1940), Republished in Spartakos No 30, 1991, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/pouliop/works/1940/05/commac.htm>



Trotsky and his Fourth International until its degeneration in 1948–52.<sup>221</sup>

Such a party cannot be founded mechanically; it will emerge in the class struggles ahead. However, it is urgent to create as soon as possible a revolutionary pre-party organization which unites activists on the basis on an authentic Marxist program and which fights for the formation of such a party. The RCIT looks forward to collaborating with Greek revolutionaries and supporting them in achieving this goal!

We hope that the present publication will be a useful contribution for discussion among revolutionaries in Greece in order to clarify the class character of Greece and the consequential tasks. We await the feedback and criticism of our Greek comrades in arms.

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221 On the RCIT's understanding of the revolutionary party see Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism, RCIT, Vienna 2014 (the book can be downloaded as a pdf at <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/>)