

## **1. Kongress SYRIZA-USF, Athen, 10. – 14. Juli 2013**

### **Rede von Alexis Tsipras während der Debatte zum Statut, 13. Juli 2013**

Comrades,

Do you know what the message from the outside is? The message from an agonizing and fighting society, with all the things that are going on in it?

The message is: get done or we're done for.

We're watching you, we're waiting for you, but we're running out of time.

We're sinking; we're drowning.

The message is: it's now or never.

The message is not just political: SYRIZA or memoranda.

The message is: SYRIZA or humanitarian catastrophe.

Because those shameless appointees of the lenders, those executors of the memoranda implementation, they have no shame at all.

They have no respect or pity for anything or anybody.

They move with the ease of a gangster from their success story and their supposedly benevolent action to the elimination of entire social groups.

Because that's what the troika commands.

So every hour, every day that goes by, the steamroller of the Samaras-Venizelos government bulldozes more people, more rights.

Every hour, every day, the demand for a powerful, efficient, militant SYRIZA is becoming more and more imperative.

Did you see what happened with the multi-bill that attempts to legalize one more atrocity - or rather a plethora of atrocities - and wipes out people who are not oath breakers, who are not lazy, who were not improperly appointed?

They just happened to belong in the category of the "proscribed" - in municipal police, in municipal government, in education.

And many others are awaiting their turn.

And why have they been proscribed?

So that the number of the "executed" is completed, as the lenders demand.

That's the provision of the multi-bill that the relevant Parliament Committee passed, indifferent of the dramas it causes.

This multi-bill is the reason why municipal governments, mayors and municipal employees are taking to the streets and are fighting to defend the fundamentals - independence of the local governments and the bread of their children.

Once more, I am taking the opportunity to salute their struggle and declare that we are and will be with them till the end - till the final victory.

Till the overthrow of this dangerous - to the people - government of the memoranda.

Their struggle, as well as the struggle of the employees of ERT (National Radio-Television), is part of a wider uncompromising struggle for the defense of democracy and social cohesion.

We will be together in their struggle till the end; militantly, peacefully, unwaveringly.

At the same time we see the coup d'état in ERT being completed through a series of other mini coups.

What started as an illegal and unconstitutional legislative act is followed up by new illegalities.

With a pirate signal broadcast and sloppily made programs of low quality broadcast from a private studio.

And with the ridiculous absurdity – the barbarity of the extreme right is always somehow ridiculous and absurd – of hastily naming their monstrosity first Greek Public Television, then just Public Television, whose initials in Greek are reminiscent of the Greek initials of IMF!

Let us note though:

The ERT employees' struggle has been going on for over a month. And this struggle, together with the solidarity movement that has developed, has changed the political momentum.

It highlighted the disposition of the Greek people to fight not only for "bread and education" (an old slogan of the students' fight against the junta) but also for freedom and democracy. It underlined the people's good chance of winning, since this movement brought down the three-party government.

Comrades,

The new government that was formed after DIMAR's (Democratic Left) withdrawal is worse than the previous one.

And has even worse things to do, even worse lies to tell, throw society into an even worse downward spiral, and drag Greece into an even worse fate.

Looking at their doings even in the last few days, you can easily draw the conclusion:

This government has come - and is supported by the lenders and Mrs. Merkel - in order to complete the disaster.

In fact, it has no plan whatsoever – it just improvises to satisfy the Troika.

Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis (the newly appointed Minister of Administrative Reform), for instance, stated to a big foreign newspaper that he can't sleep at night because he has to sign off on people losing their jobs.

Like Olli Rehn once told us that we ruin his weekends, as he can't play football and has to deal with Greek issues instead.

Mr. Hadjidakis, who is drawing up a law to keep shops open all Sundays, is wondering why people are protesting about this and not about Sunday afternoons!

Mrs. Bakoyannis has stated that she is saddened by the provisions of the multi-bill, but nevertheless she assured that she will vote for it as Greece is in a very tight spot.

Mr. Samaras states that he is almost happy we are doing so well and that in 2014 we will be coming out on the avenue of growth.

And Mr. Venizelos, in such times of austerity, with a special amendment to the multi-bill that is destroying people's lives, demands to be able to travel on the Prime Minister's aircraft.

Once more, I would like to address the democratic people that pinned their hopes and expectations on PASOK and fought for change:

Does this New Democracy's component called PASOK have anything to do with 3<sup>rd</sup> September (PASOK was founded by Andreas Papandreou on 3-9-1974) and PASOK that promised change, national independence, and social justice?

Does Samaras' Vice-President have anything to do with even the ghost of the so-called centre-left?

Does this party's policy have anything to do with what it promised and committed itself to?

But this is no time for weeping over lost glories; it is time for action, fight and resistance, before the country is totally and irreversibly destroyed.

And this SYRIZA's call for fight is addressed to each and every one.

To all the people of the Left – whichever party they belong to – who in their life and action are driven by the ideals of democracy, social justice, and socialism.

To all democrats and patriots, all those who still believe that democracy is the quintessence of a society of civilization and solidarity.

To all those who put freedom and national sovereignty before calculation and self-interest.

To intellectuals, to people of the arts and letters, who see Greece of civilization being pulled down and dragged to the slave markets of the lenders.

To the young who believe that they can change the world – this is what we believe, too.

Even to those conservative citizens who today feel offended by the racist propaganda against Greece, by Merkel's gestures, and by the troika's humiliating drills against our country.

We are saying that it is about time that democratic sensibility, national alertness, love for our country and for freedom, the wish to get rid of memoranda and "protectors", the vision of a free and democratic Greece that doesn't throw away any of her children, **united** the vast majority of our people.

**In an uncompromising struggle against authoritarianism, repression, constitution violations, and "black"**. (Like the black screens of the suspended national broadcaster.)

In a **fight for the salvation and reconstruction** of a Greece delivered from vested interests, intransparency, scams, bribery, cronyism, the everyday barbarity of neoliberalism.

That considers an enemy and treats as an enemy democracy and any citizen who guards its Thermopylae.

This is our call, comrades.

And all the discussions, the proposals, the disagreements, the controversies in our convention concern this aim.

How to make SYRIZA more sound, more efficient, more ready to govern and lead this country step by step out of this morass of destruction.

That's what lies behind the discussion about SYRIZA's transformation, about its revival as a single party, about the role of the party member, about securing the party's internal democracy.

There have been a lot of opinions, viewpoints, remarks, proposals.

This is a real wealth for our party.

Even disagreement is a wealth.

Because we are not and do not want to be a party of political instructors, or of professors of power; a party with big mouth but small ears.

We listen, listen, and listen to each other and know how to synthesize and move on.

Comrades,

As the welfare state is collapsing, thousands of people are getting self-organized creating hundreds of social solidarity structures across Greece.

**So that no-one is left alone in the crisis.** With no exclusion. For everybody.

This is a people's collective reaction and EAM (National Liberation Front) comes back to collective memory. EAM that saved the country from starvation and organized the epic of National Resistance.

- Today, comrades from Portugal, Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, and England are coming here trying to comprehend this great self-managed movement.
- Social solidarity structures constitute fields of social support, of collective consciousness development, and of political activation.

SYRIZA got soon involved in these movements

- Mainly with our members' participation
- With the Mutual Help Fund that the party founded and which is funded by the 20% of our MPs' remuneration.
- With campaigns in European countries, which today are bearing political, social, and financial fruit.

**So, what do we need to do as SYRIZA? We need to take a further step in solidarity.**

**A. For food**

- To help all these structures with large campaigns and money as people's needs seem to increase dramatically.
- To politically defend the No Intermediaries Movement

**B. For health**

There is a need for the combination of health structures with trade unions in Health and for penetration of solidarity structures into hospitals.

**C. For housing**

To build a movement against foreclosures and evictions.

This requires activation of all the involved sections and sectors of SYRIZA.

People are not only mobilized by political discourse but also by social and political action.

Don't underestimate that.

Ardently strengthen the solidarity structures, take part in this great venture of our people; in this great historical process, fundamental prop and guarantee for a future Left government, for a great social transformation – for solidarity, resistance, subversion.

Comrades,

Don't forget: tomorrow our party initiates a new course that will confront the existing balance of power and collide head-on with the Memoranda.

We are starting on a difficult road.

In front of us is a determined opponent.

An opponent prepared to fight to the very end.

Because if they lose, they lose everything: vested interests, privileges, access to power.

This opponent will be in our way, ready to take advantage of any slip of ours, any mistake of ours, any pretext we give.

They will use any foul means there are in order to harm us.

We are coming to the foreground in order to trigger huge changes and subversions.

Not only in Greece, but in the whole of Europe.

Be certain that no-one will do us any favors.

Neither our enemies nor our friends.

These latter ones will be our harshest judges.

Now that the eyes of society are on us, we must prove that we are able to do what we are saying.

That we are able to govern.

And this will be decided by the outcome of this Convention, as well.

Whether we know, we want and we can.

And whether we are able not only to come out of here united, but also to make all our hammers bang in unison.

Comrades,

At this point, I would like to clarify and correct certain misconceptions, intentional or unintentional.

First of all,

I heard the sound argument: 'How can you possibly decide for us? What gives you the right?'

And here I want to correct this misconception.

No-one wants or has chosen to decide for others. Heavens forbid!

But for SYRIZA - our common home, the new unified democratic actor of its members - it is up to our Convention of 3,500 elected representatives of our thousands of members to decide.

The Convention - and only the Convention - will decide.

Nobody else!

And whatever the Convention decides will be accepted by all.

Anything else would be an insult to the thousands of our members who took part in the pre-convention procedures.

It would be an insult to the sovereign body of the Convention, which decides on everything.

It is an offence to the very core of our democratic substance and of our democratic procedures, which are the foundation of our collective functioning!

I want to talk about the essence of things and I want to talk about everything.

Let's talk as comrades who respect each other's difference of opinion, but clearly and openly. Because we are at a historic turning point that calls for clear talk.

First and foremost, the Convention will decide on all the issues put forward and discussed in the party's organizations.

Our duty is to come out of here with clear answers.

Clear commitments to the people about what we will do, how we will govern.

Clear answers, clear framework and operational rules of the new unified political actor.

Secondly:

In this fascinating SYRIZA's journey, on the road to our people's great victory, no-one is excluded - on the contrary, we can't afford to spare anyone.

There is room for all of us - and even more - on this historic voyage.

All of us - and even more - but no one more equal than the other.

All of us different, all of us rich with our background and opinions, but all of us equal and all of us accountable to our members.

I listened to Manolis Glezos very carefully.

I have to say that I wasn't surprised by the core of his views but by the high tone he used.

Manolis has had these same views since 2003. I must give him credit for his constancy and persistence.

Views that he expressed during our National Conference in December, where he openly disagreed with its resolutions.

So I don't want to feign ignorance or surprise.

But I will not pretend I am indifferent, either.

Manolis' speech made me feel sad.

But it didn't spite me.

You can't feel spite for the people you love – you just feel sad.

I felt sad not because of his views and his arguments but because he chose this historic moment to speak as a representative of one of our components.

And I'm saying this because comrade Manolis in our eyes and in the eyes of the Greek people is not a representative of a component.

Manolis represents the epitome of the generation of the Resistance, the generation of the struggle for democracy, the generation of the United Democratic Left and the Lambrakis Democratic Youth.

He represents everything that helped the Left survive persecution and illegality and exist today as a great force of resistance and power.

He represents everything that moved many of us in the course of our lives and brought us close to the Left and to the vision of a society delivered from exploitation.

So, listen, comrades and you comrade Manolis, to a couple of words from the heart.

We honor and respect our symbols.

But our symbols themselves taught us first how to honor our struggle, our duty, and our truth – at least in the way each of us perceives and believes in it.

And the truth is set by Life itself.

By reality, which sets us the duty to respond to the demands of the whole society that asks us to transcend old standards and set new ones.

1,650,000 citizens transcended themselves and voted for us a year ago.

It was a giant step for them.

They haven't all of a sudden become either SYRIZA specialists or component specialists.

They haven't even become leftists.

We must educate them and encourage them to become more radical and leftists.

But when people transcend themselves and come towards you, you cannot refuse any transcendence, any risk, any departure from your certainties.

Since this is not about a whim but about a historic challenge that concerns life itself, the survival of hundreds of thousands of people.

Since this concerns the very existence and independence of our country, there is no room for sentimentality.

What we believe must be said clearly and the body of the Convention must decide - decision from the depth of the soul, from the heart, and from the mind.

With reason.

And this is the simple thing I understand:

We are not going to win this battle if the message we send off to the people who have now voted for us and now put their hopes in us is:

'Change and come to us.

We don't change anything in any way.

The way we were working when SYRIZA had 3% is the same we are working now that we have 30%.'

And don't make the mistake to think that these people are secured for SYRIZA; that they can be taken for granted.

They are watching us closely. They are testing us.

We will win them over only if we move forward with bold steps that will show we are determined.

Determined to change ourselves first in order to change the world.

First we should put our own certainties at risk so as to persuade them to drop their certainties concerning the bourgeois parties.

First we should sacrifice ourselves so as to call them to ardently support a great struggle for subversion, independence, and dignity.

Besides, what can we tell these people?

That the Party that calls you to rally in order to change the country is a Party with 14 different statutes and 14 different programs?

That we are calling you to entrust the fortunes of this country to a party with bodies appointed and not democratically elected by its members and its conventions?

That the future of the country will be decided by some people who are not accountable to a democratically elected body?

And if they are not accountable to their party's bodies how can they possibly be accountable to the people?

I also heard some ones talking about ultimatums and blackmailing timetables.

Listen, comrades: no ultimatum, no blackmail.

We are building a democratic, pluralistic, multi-tendency political actor.

Yes, but with a unified framework both for external and for internal use.

And since I don't like to hide behind my finger, my disagreement with Manolis is different from the one with certain other comrades who want to continue in SYRIZA, not to build with all of us our common political actor but each of us our own political actor.

And here I would like to put forward a question that is not procedural, but substantially political.

There is a view that says:

In SYRIZA we can recruit members and build up our own separate revolutionary organization.

On the one hand, SYRIZA's loose statute, tendencies, lists, and democracy. On the other hand, our democratic centralism and internal discipline.

This, comrades, cannot be accepted.

And it is not a matter of wording or statute; it is a matter of political agreement and understanding.

It is not a matter of timetables or bogus deals.

It is a matter of substance.

Either we are all bound by SYRIZA's statute – and from then on, within the framework of SYRIZA, we can have tendencies and organizations and trends and components and whatever else we want, but within SYRIZA

Or each of us will be bound by their own statute, which means forget it.

Clear words.

Clear commitments.

And allow me to solve another misconception.

We are not talking here about the enshrined in the statute, nonnegotiable right to express a different opinion.

We are not talking about the enshrined in the statute right to tendencies.

Nor about collectivities near or next to the Party, in which Party members participate.

No-one can be deprived of the right to form such collectivities of ideological nature, with their own publications and ideological work.

These can and should contribute to the ferment of ideas and ideological choices.

Which means, to put it clearly, that if any of today's components that haven't chosen to stop functioning and integrate their members into the unified party feel their ideological choices aren't fully expressed in SYRIZA, they have the right to support their views through such collective actions.

But by making it clear that they are within the SYRIZA framework.

That they are bound by its statute and resolutions.

Therefore, I sum up:

One member, one vote.

No privileges, no exclusions.

Recallability, accountability, democratic operation.

Political agreement that the statute and the collective political resolutions of SYRIZA bind us all.

And these are not ultimatums but self-evident commitments.

Commitments that obviously need a reasonable period of time – some months – to be fully implemented and in every technical detail.

But as far as the agreement in principle is concerned, it doesn't take time but courage and guts and soul.

To decide everything now, in our Convention - and all of us together.

To spare nobody on this fascinating voyage.

To leave the land behind.

To put out to the open sea – all of us together.

No one wants to nor should they decide for the other.

We will all decide in this convention about how we are going to travel on.

We are all equal members of the historic 1<sup>st</sup> Convention of SYRIZA.

And to our beloved Manolis' crucial question: 'We are not going to change – what are you going to do?'

I answer:

What you, Manolis, are going to do - as you have always done in your life – is what you believe in and think is right.

Nobody is going to impose anything on you.

We can only do one thing:

All of us make our collective decisions together.

And whatever these decisions might be, this is what I'm going to do on Monday morning:

I'll take you with me to the dismissed municipal employees to fight our battle, to the ERT's building, to the poor neighborhoods of Athens, to the industrial areas of unemployment, to the gold mines of Halkidiki, to our deserted villages - to go throughout Greece together.

To fight the battle and give the message:

Despite our disagreements, we are here.

We are united under the same goal.

To stop this hurricane of memoranda.

To save the country and the people from disaster and rebuild our country on a solid basis of social justice, independence, popular sovereignty, and dignity.

Comrades,

We can win and we shall win.

We'll make the step forward – all of us together.

And you should know.

You should be proud of the fruit of our struggle so far – and moved.

But you should know one thing: we haven't sung our best songs yet.

And we'll sing them together.

Bye-bye, comrades!