



Euro crisis and Euro exit, which perspective?

Susanne Kühn Mon, 22/07/2013 - 10:12

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The permanent crisis of the EU and the Eurozone has raised the question of an exit from the euro or the EU in practically every country in Europe. That is even true for the Left. In Greece, it has become practically the first question for every radical. In Germany, Oskar Lafontaine and Sahra Wagenknecht, the co-chair and deputy chair of Die Linke, are toying with the idea.

In the coming years, the more the crisis of the EU deepens, the more this question will stand in the centre of political debate. Already an increasing section of the political left is raising the slogan of an exit from the Eurozone for countries like Greece.

The reformist Left, the Stalinist KKE or the left Keynesians, such as Costas Lapavistas of Syriza, promise that a return to the drachma would lay the basis for an "independent" and prosperous national economy on the basis of a Keynesian programme or, in the case of the KKK, an even less clearly defined, "people power". Lapavistas acknowledges that such a currency reform in Greece would lead to a massive devaluation of the new currency and thus of any remaining monetary assets of the masses. However, after a certain "restructuring phase" a new stage of well-balanced development of the national economy would be achieved. This programme is utopian and directed against the working class.

Why? The crisis cannot be resolved on the basis of an "independent" national, and still capitalist, economy. The world market and the imperialist world system are realities that define the place of any particular national economy in the context of the international division of labour and its hierarchy, independent of whether or not it has its own currency.

Even though revolutionary Marxists defend the right of national self-determination (and therefore the right of any country to leave the EU) it would be politically dangerous, indeed a damaging concession to nationalism, to suggest that the social interests of the working class and other non-exploiting classes could be better advanced in an "independent" national state.

The system of nation states of liberal capitalism is much more of a restriction, an obstacle, for the further development of the productive forces, it is the source of crisis not its solution. The unification of the EU, and the introduction of the euro are a response to the real developmental tendencies of the productive forces, although under the rule of finance capital and the governments of Germany, France and the other "leading" EU states.

However, the current crisis of the EU and the ever stronger drifting apart of the EU and the Eurozone are a necessary and in no way accidental consequence of the fact that the imperialist bourgeoisie tried to unite Europe in its own interests, even if what they achieve is the opposite of this. The rule of this bourgeoisie is itself an obstacle to the solution of the European crisis and of the huge problems of the continent and the overcoming of national limitations and social inequality.

How should revolutionaries and the working class respond to this?

Should they themselves raise the slogan of a return to their "own" national state, to their "own" currency? In reality, that would be a step back from the already achieved degree of internationalisation of the productive forces, it would be a reactionary solution.

The slogan should rather be, "No sacrifice for the EU or the euro!" That means no to all austerity measures and conditions. No doubt such a policy, even if it were a bourgeois government that refused to follow the dictates of the EU, could lead to the expulsion of the country from the euro zone. The German and French imperialists would probably want to make an example of it.

In such a case, the working class movement of Europe should fight to oppose the expulsion of the country and instead call for the cancellation of all austerity programmes, the cancellation of the debts and so on. The answer of revolutionaries to the imperialist unification is fundamentally not a return to independent nation states, with their own currencies, but rather the unification of Europe under the working class, the struggle for the United Socialist States of Europe. The exit of any particular country from the euro zone is in no way an unavoidable stage in this perspective. On the contrary, in the struggle for the revolutionary unification of Europe that would be much more of a step backwards.

In his "Peace Programme" of 1916-17, Leon Trotsky dealt hypothetically with the case of a an imperialist unification of Europe and what would be the policy of the working class in such a case:

"Let us suppose for a moment that German imperialism were successful in forcing through a semi-unification of Europe, just as Prussian militarism in the past succeeded in a semi-unification of Germany. What would then be the central slogan of the European proletariat? Would it be the dissolution of the enforced unification and a return of all the peoples to the ?protection? of isolated nation states? And indeed the re-establishment of the customs barriers, the "national" monetary systems, the "national" social legislation and so on? Certainly not. The programme of the revolutionary European movement would be the destruction of the antidemocratic and enforced form of the Union, alongside the maintenance and extension of its basis in the form of a complete removal of all customs barriers, unification of the legal systems, above all the labour laws and social legislation etc. In other words, the slogan of the ?United States of Europe, without customs and without a standing army" would, under these conditions, be the unifying and leading slogan of the European revolution."

Workers' government

This strategic line must of course be accompanied by the demand for a workers' government, or workers' and peasants' government, as a transitional form to the rule of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Even for a workers' government, should one be established for example in Greece, an exit from the euro would not be a strategic option. Rather, the key issue would be the closer collaboration with the working class of the whole continent and the broadening of the European revolution. For example, an immediate central goal would be to challenge the control of the European bourgeoisie over the central bank, demanding the nationalisation without compensation of European banks under the control of the workers, the trade unions and the working class account holders of the banks.

Naturally, it could become necessary for a workers' state to leave the euro zone, but that would be entirely dependent on the tempo of development of the class struggle across the continent. The formation of a workers' government in just one state would have massive consequences for the whole of Europe, in particular for the EU and the Eurozone.

The assumption that a workers' government in any European country, even in Germany, should, in any event, leave the euro, ultimately undermines the basis of internationalism. For those who hold such a position, the revolution in Europe is, at best, the sum of separate national revolutions, rather than national revolutions being parts of the greater European movement.

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