

transform!

european network for alternative thinking
and political dialogue

Since December 2009 the **transform! europe** newsletter has been published regularly once a month. It contains information about the activities of our network, its members and observing members and about important initiatives of social movements we are taking part in.

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Launch at Firenze 10+10

Towards the Alter Summit in Early June 2013

An outstanding event during the Firenze 10+10 Forum was the launching of the *Alter Summit*. It was attended by 850 people from 20 European countries, representing more than 100 organizations.

In the course of the assembly speakers of Greek trade unions and social movements, the CGT, CADTM, *Attac Europe*, the TNI, the Spanish *15-M Movement* as well as the Deputy General secretary of the ETUC, Parick Itchert, took the floor. On behalf of the *transform!* network Walter Baier addressed the audience by emphasizing the need for a joint European struggle of all

social, cultural and political actors for a European alternative.

The launching event demonstrated that already now, the *Alter Summit* project enjoys the support of many cultural and political personalities. There have been solidarity addresses by Ken Loach (film director), Jan Kavan (former president of UN General Assembly), Gabi Zimmer (GUE/NGL), Pierre Laurent (the president of the EL), Alexis Tsipras (SYRIZA), Isabelle Durant and Philippe Lamberts (both MEPs, Greens), and by Liem Hoang Ngoc (MEP, Socialists).

The proposal which has been presented in accordance with important Greek social movements and the two major Greek trade unions is to hold the *Alter Summit* from 7 to 9 June 2013 in Athens.

In a number of countries there have been established national preparation committees; an assembly of delegates of these committees and the European networks which are active in the preparation will be held on 13 and 14 December in Brussels.

Find below the press release on the *Alter Summit* from 11 November.

“Our Democracy against their Austerity – Joining Forces for a Peaceful, Social, Ecological and Democratic Europe”

Press Release, 11 November 2012

A coalition committed to creating a new balance of power in Europe announced six months of mobilization against the EU “austeritarian” choices. Actions at European level shall culminate in an *Alter Summit in early June 2013.**

During the *Florence 10+10* rally, 10 years after the first European Social Forum in Florence (2002), the *Alter Summit* was launched, with an audience of 850 people from 20 countries in Europe, representing more than 100 organizations, including many unions (national or European), social movements, research institutes and environmental, feminist or anti-globalization organizations. The *Alter Summit* project also benefits from the support of many cultural and political personalities.

The will to convene this Summit of the peoples and alternatives is based on a call (www.altersummit.eu) that identifies the fundamentally political dimension of the EU crisis: the austeritarian answers are chosen knowingly although they aggravate the crisis, to impose a social order failover to an ultra-liberal - at the cost of millions of jobs, abrupt social decline and significant threats to democracy itself.

At the launch of the *Alter Summit*, Greek unions and the committee of Greek social movements present at Florence, have expressed their hope that this summit will be held in Athens in early June 2013. “Greece was the European Laboratory for the destruction of social rights”, they said, “but it can also be the laboratory of popular resistance and reclaiming democracy. We need the support of all the peoples of Europe, since each people defending their rights contributes to social rights across Europe”.

Alternatives exist! The peoples of Europe may be free of the burden of debt; austerity must be replaced by Tax Justice and the creation of millions of jobs for ecological transition; social rights must be restored, poverty and insecurity – of which women are the primary victims – must be fought; the freedom of collective bargaining fully respected; a fairer and truly democratic society is possible now.

The shared belief is that the centralization of economic and political power (by the Commission, the Central Bank and the European Council) denies the real power of national mobilizations – yet it is therefore very important to build without delay,

the bases of a genuine European social movement. The project is based on the development of national or regional coalitions throughout Europe, and a series of steps in the mobilization.

The day of strikes and actions initiated for 14 November by trade unions in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta and Cyprus, and supported by the ETUC (list of actions: www.etuc.org/a/10446) and unions and social movements in many countries, is obviously the first concrete realization of this progressive mobilization that member organizations of the *Alter Summit* initiative are calling for. This is a historic event, the first transnational strike in European history!

The "Spring Summit" of March 2013, in which the EU will define its political priorities for the year will be the opportunity for significant protests, whether in Brussels or across Europe. Many other actions are planned (see in particular the final declaration of *Florence 10+10* below as well as at: www.firenze1010.eu).

The many organizations involved will take until mid-December to confirm and clarify their major programme of mobilizations, converging towards the *Alter Summit* in early June.

* *Alter Summit: Summit of peoples and alternatives. Building a social movement for a social, ecological and democratic Europe.*

Contact and further information:

www.altersummit.eu

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Outcome and Aftermath

Firenze 10+10

Initiated and organised by social movements, ten years after the first *European Social Forum* in Florence, the *Firenze 10+10* assembly took place.

Along the five thematic axes: Democracy / Finance, debt, austerity / Labour and social rights / Commons and public services / Europe in the Mediterranean and the world, many seminars, convergence meetings and discussions were held.

Also networks and campaigns have been initiated, among them the newly built *European Progressive Economists Network* in which *transform! europe* takes part (find the respective press release below).

There have also been made first steps towards a solidarity campaign proposed by Greek activists, called "*Solidarity for*

All" – a call for supporting and cooperating with Greek grassroots solidarity initiatives and for organising medical support (watch out for more information on transform's website or contact: solidarityforall@gmail.com).

transform! europe organised two grand discussions with participation of social movement activists, political actors and trade unionists entitled: "*How to Found Europe Anew? - Which Construction? Which Political Strategy?*" and "*A Dialogue between Social Movements and Political Actors: Coping with the Challenge Posed by the Crisis*". Among the speakers of the latter discussion for the first time also the ETUC Deputy General Secretary, Patrick Itschert, took part (for more details see the last special edition vol. 13a of our newsletter).

Furthermore a merged workshop on "*How to Oppose the Extreme Right*" together with *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation* and *Prague Spring 2 Network* with activists from all over Europe took place.

transform! was also present with a stand in cooperation with the *Party of the European Left* and the member organization *transform!Italia* which presented the Italian edition of the *transform!* journal #10: "*Democrazia: una sfida per l'Europa*".

Find below the call for common action and the proposed roadmap emerged from the **final convergence meeting of *Firenze 10+10*** and the press release of the newly founded **European Progressive Economists Network**.

Firenze 10+10 Final Declaration

“Joining Forces for a Common Europe – Our Democracy instead of Their Austerity”

More than 4,000 participants, 300 networks and organisations from 28 countries from all over Europe and beyond, met at Fortezza da Basso in Florence from 9 to 11 November, to debate and strategize together for another Europe. Over 100 meetings took place and many new networks and campaigns were launched.

Social organizations, social movements, trade unions and citizens working against austerity and debt, for natural and social commons, for social and labour rights, for democracy, global justice and peace, for gender issues and migrant rights have gathered in Florence 10+10.

We call for a European permanent mobilization to support the fights against the crisis and build a future for everyone in Europe and in the world. This mobilization will include both convergence and decentralized actions.

The first unifying initiative towards a European-wide convergence is the general strikes and mobilisations against austerity in many countries in Europe on 14 November 2012.

We propose to have a **common day of action on the occasion of the EU Spring Summit**, which will take place in Brussels on 23 March. The format and final call for this common mobilization will be discussed and agreed upon in the following months in an open and participatory process.

We call for endorsement of the following actions and mobilizations:

- 18 December 2012: World Migrants Day
- 23-27 January 2013: Action against financialization of life and commons (actions against banks)
- 8 March 2013: European action affirming women emancipation against austerity and debt
- 26-30 March 2013: *World Social Forum* in Tunis
- May 2013: *Blockupy* in Frankfurt
- 7-9 June 2013 (proposal): *Alter Summit* in Athens
- June 2013: *G8 Counter Summit* in UK (tbc)
- Concrete solidarity actions to support the people hit by austerity policies as well as the victims of racist violence and abuse

All organisations and movements may endorse the actions in which to participate and the forms for doing so.

Reports from the 5 alliance spheres and other documents will be posted on the

website www.firenze1010.eu as they are sent to: info@firenze1010.eu

European Progressive Economists Network

Common Call for Another Economic Policy for Europe

Press Release, 9 November 2012

The *European Progressive Economists Network* has been launched at the *Firenze 10+10* forum meeting promoted by *EuroMemorandum*, *Économistes Atterrés* from France, *Sbilanciamoci!* from Italy, and *Another Road for Europe*, bringing together a variety of groups of economists and think tanks including *Econosphères* from Belgium, *econoNuestra* from Spain, the *Transnational Institute*, the network *Critical Political Economy*, *transform! europe* and many other organisations.

The *European Progressive Economists Network* has launched the following document on policy alternatives for Europe and will participate in the initiatives and events emerging from *Firenze 10+10*.

“The European Progressive Economists Network brings together groups of economists and other researchers, institutes and civil-society coalitions who are critical of the dominant economic and social policies that have brought Europe to the current crisis. We seek to promote a European wide debate on policy alternatives based on the following six points.

1. Austerity policies should be reversed and the drastic conditionality imposed on countries receiving EU emergency funds must be radically revised, starting with Greece. The dangerous constraints of the “fiscal compact” need be removed,

so that countries can defend public expenditure, welfare and wages, while the EU assumes a greater role in stimulating demand, promoting full employment and taking a new course of sustainable and equitable progress. European policies should reduce current account imbalances by obliging surplus countries to also adjust.

2. Policies must favour a redistribution that reduces inequalities, and move towards fiscal harmonization, putting an end to tax competition, with a shift of the tax burden away from labour and towards profits and wealth. Policies must favour public services and social protection. Labour and collective bargaining have to be defended; labour rights are a key part of Europe's democratic rights.

3. Facing Europe's financial crisis – marked by the interaction between a banking crisis and the public debt crisis – the European Central Bank must act as a lender of last resort in the government bond markets. The public debt problem has to be solved with a common responsibility of the Eurozone; debt should be assessed by a public audit.

4. A radical downsizing of the financial sector is needed, with a financial transaction tax, the elimination of speculative finance and the control of capital movements. The financial system must be brought under social control; it must be transformed so that it promotes socially and environmentally sustainable productive investment and employment.

5. A fundamental ecological transition provides a way out of Europe's crisis. Europe must reduce its ecological footprint and its use of energy and natural resources. Its policies must enhance new ways of producing and consuming. A major investment programme promoting sustainability can provide high quality jobs, expanding capabilities in new innovative fields and enlarging possibilities for action at the local level, especially on public goods.

6. Democracy has to be expanded at all levels in Europe. The European Union has to be reformed and the concentration of power in the hands of few states and unaccountable institutions that has taken place during the crisis has to be reversed. The aim is to achieve greater citizens' participation, a major role for the European Parliament, and a much more significant democratic control over key decisions.

Facing a risk of collapse, Europe's policies need to change course. An alliance between civil society, trade unions, social movements and progressive political forces is needed to lead Europe out of the crisis created by neo-liberalism and finance. The European Progressive Economists Network seeks to contribute to this change."

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Speech by Haris Golemis* at Firenze 10+10

Coping with the Challenge Posed by the Crisis

On the Dialogue between Social Movements and Political Actors

I will try to tackle the issue of the need for an enhanced cooperation between social movements and political actors for a progressive way out of the crisis in Europe, starting from the national level.

This choice is based on the belief, which was cemented by the developments in Greece during the last three years, that taking political power in one European country – preferably of the Euro-zone – is a necessary, but certainly not sufficient condition for the refoundation of Europe, which is the only way to stop social catastrophe, undemocratic authoritarianism and the rise of national-

ism, right wing extremism and even fascism.

A victory of SYRIZA in the Greek elections of June 2012 and the formation of a radical left government determined to disobey the neoliberal dictates of the Troika, would have marked a real political breakthrough, a rupture to the neoliberal edifice of the EU. A possible contamination of other EU countries by the success of a small political force in a small country of the European South (which unfortunately did not come) could have signalled the start of a real change in Europe and the world.

Following these first statements, some friends and comrades might think that, by stressing the importance of the “national” and the “political”, I have turned to an “anti-European party bureaucrat” and in any case that my intervention has nothing to do with the title and the aim of this discussion, with our meeting here in Florence and the *Alter Summit* process.

Of course, this is not so. My intention is to use the Greek case as an interesting example of a successful “meeting” between social and political actors, which could and should be made also at Euro-

pean level. I put the word “meeting” in inverted commas, so that there is no misunderstanding that any kind of “dialogue” took place around a table among representatives of parties, labour unions and the *indignados*.

What really happened was that the actions of resistance to the policies of various governments and the Troika, coming from people in general, as well as from the social and political forces, although either spontaneous or independent and autonomous, converged towards some more or less common targets, as if they were guided by the “invisible hand of history”. This common march was certainly facilitated by the fact that a considerable number of political activists were either closely connected with the trade-unionists or actively participating in social movements, following the tradition of a certain part of the Greek radical political Left, including SYRIZA.

To be more specific, the spectacular 27 % of SYRIZA in the June 2012 election was not an automatic result of the crisis and the policies of extreme austerity. It was the end of a process, very condensed in time, which started with a wave of spontaneous social unrest across the country and especially in Athens and the big cities, but also of general strikes, occupations of factories and public buildings, demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience like the

“don’t pay” (the tolls, the increased transport tickets, the electricity bills etc.) ad hoc movements. It was these actions, which involved trade-unionists, parties’ and social movements’ activists and simple people which in fact forced Papandreou to give his place to the unelected technocrat Papademos, who was himself forced to resign and proclaim the elections of May 2012. During that period, the “social” played a crucial role in political developments.

The fact that after these elections, SYRIZA denied to enter a government of “national unity” (taking into consideration past, bad experiences of other radical left parties in other countries) and comply with the Troika orders, was responsible for having new elections in June which, as I said before, could have changed the course of history in Europe. At that time, it was the “political” which was possibly more important.

My reference to the Greek experience was made only in order to show the importance of the “meeting” and cooperation of social and political actors and it was not, of course, intended to be used as a model for other European countries or as a European model of cooperation between social and political actors. The ways we should consciously and carefully prepare the ground for a wide convergence at European level are the issues which we have started discussing here in Florence and which will be at the

centre of our efforts in the immediate future.

At this point, I would like to return to my initial thesis regarding the importance of the “national” and the “political” for a change in Europe, by stating clearly what I hinted at the beginning regarding necessary and sufficient conditions. No political success in a single European country can be sustainable if it is not followed, within a short time, by similar successes in other countries. A progressive island in a reactionary archipelago is a thing of the past. Finally and in order to avoid any misunderstandings, I must say that for some of us the main purpose is to build a European radical subjectivity, which will be complementary and not antagonistic to the corresponding national ones in our struggle for social transformation. It is for this reason why a broad alliance and cooperation of social and political actors at European level are absolutely necessary during the present crisis. It is for this reason why we wholeheartedly support the *Alter Summit* Process. And it is for this reason why we would be happy if a big event was organized in Athens next summer.

** Haris Golemis is an economist, Director of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute (Athens), member of the Board of transform! europe and of Synaspismos.*

ETUC Day of Action on 14 November

A Turning Point?

New Formation of European Solidarity

By Richard Detje, “Sozialismus”

On 14 November – in the middle of the week – something new happened. Radiating from Spain and Portugal unionists in Italy, Greece, France, and Belgium laid down work. A coordinated “Day of Actions and Solidarity” as has never before taken place in Europe. A

day of resistance against the restructuring plans of Europe for which Mario Draghi, president of the European Central Bank, had coined the short phrase: “The European social model is dead”.

The backdrops of three transformational processes behind these developments

1. For three years, the global financial market- and economic crisis characterizes the economic, social and political life of Europe. Instead of counteracting

the contraction of social wealth after the pit of the crisis in the summer of 2009, since the 2nd quarter of 2012 the European Currency Union finds itself in a renewed crisis. The majority of the population pays for it in hard cash with its social existence. Unemployment is reaching up to 25 % in Greece and Spain and over 15 % in Ireland and Portugal – historically the highest levels. But even an unemployment quota of between 35 % and 55 % amongst the younger generation are only the tip of a socio-economic iceberg against which all perspectives of the future are doomed to burst asunder; in Europe's crisis states, the prospects of a safe biographies of earning beyond precarious, temporary, and non-existence guaranteeing jobs are limited to a minority of the traditional elites.

2. Simultaneously, the thermometer of current crisis re-definitions, the development of public debts is sharply pointing upward. In Spain and Portugal the debt level since 2008 has risen for about 50 points to 90.7 % respectively 119 %, in Ireland and Greece for about 60 points to 118 respectively 171 %. And this under the hardest austerity regime which even Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan under democratic conditions – outside of the historical laboratory of the Chicago Boys in Chile – would have held to be imaginable.

3. Europe's crisis-management happens largely outside of democratic means of influence. With Six-Pact, European Semester, and the Fiscal Pact procedures have been created which in the years to come will be institutionally codified – with a Euro financial minister and a Euro-economic government which are to be legitimized through a “convent”. The brief intermezzo of “technical cabinets” in Greece and Italy would turn out to be nothing than an experimental phase of a Europe-wide austerity regime steering towards an authoritarian capitalism. This regime is based on social and political divisions which in the media are often drawn between a Mediterranean “periphery” and a “core Europe” around Germany. However,

decisive are the countries of France – whose Social-Democratic president finds himself in an opinion poll ditch due to his agenda of indifference – as well as Italy where new elections will take place in the spring of 2013.

Within this scenario, the “Day of Actions and Solidarity” of the *European Trade Union Federation* (EGB) could mark a turning point. Because to this date, it was at best in News releases that solidarity had stamped the European trade union life. Even in countries where the amputation of the European social model – catchword pension at age 67 – was regulated from the get-go under the aegis of the EU. No clear European trade union politics to speak of have existed during the last five years of European crisis and rising austerity politics. Nevertheless, with a wise politics of trade unions this situation could change.

The foundations were created on this 14 November

In Spain and Portugal, a 24-hour general strike widely paralyzed public life; not only in traffic, postal system, the educational sector and in hospitals, but also in the industrial sector, like in VW-Seat, Opel and Nissan factories in Spain; in Portugal it was the third, in Spain the second such general strike of this year. In Madrid and Barcelona alone about 2 million people are said to have taken to the streets. Greece would after a two-day general strike during the first week of November lay down work once again for three hours/day. In Belgium, railroad traffic services were crippled and in Italy the CGIL called for a four-hour work stoppage; in France protest took place under the slogan “For Employment and Solidarity – against Austerity Measures”. And in Germany, actions of solidarity occurred amongst others in Stuttgart, Berlin, Frankfurt, Kassel and Munich. On 10 October over 100.000 people had demonstrated in Great Britain against the politics of the ToryLibs; the TUC has announced a “general strike”.

This was by far not the abolition of the split in the European trade union move-

ment – a line which does not run between winners of a competitive capitalist regime and debtor states, but also within national trade union associations. But it could be that the start of a new narrative within the European trade union movement. The coordinates have changed: who ever is against the authoritarian socialisation model á la Fiscal Pact, should also warm up to the re-foundation of a new, economically and democratically based Europe.

Last but not least, towards this end, conceptual work for the new foundation of a democratic Europe is a challenge. Only a few days before 14 November, 4000 representatives of civil society organisations had met in Florence for an exchange and had, amongst other things, agreed upon an *Alter Summit* in June of 2013 to take place in Athens – a summit in which an alternative agenda against the fiscal dictatorship of the EU-crisis management shall be integrated.

Admittedly, the time horizon of this alternative agenda for a democratic Europe is short. Within two years, Merkel/Schäuble would like to see their “New Europe” implanted.

14 November should be the beginning of an agenda of a Europe in solidarity between trade unions and other civil society organisations. The task is not easy to shoulder: aside of the Anti-Agenda it will be paramount to deal with an agreement about ways in which employment from North to South, from West to East could be structured in new ways – in short, what a new economic order based on solidarity must look which is capable of marking a historical departure and progress against Lisbon competitive strategies which since long have failed. An economic order which opens future perspectives to unemployed youth in that it makes decisions about “what”, “how” and “for whom” production is organised.

This text was originally published in German at: www.sozialismus.de

European General Strike on 14 November: One of the Most Significant Events, during those Years of the Crisis

14N Day in Greece

By Dimitris Karamanis, Member of the Secretariat of Youth of Synaspismos

In Greece, the 14N day was marked by demonstrations in Athens and Thessaloniki which were basically focused on sending a message of solidarity to the Spanish, Portuguese and Italians who are also struggling against the neoliberal attack.

Syntagma square, the trademark place of the struggle that Greek people has been giving since the Troika (EC, ECB and IMF) came to the country in May 2010, was filled by young activists of SYRIZA and other groups, waving huge flags of Greece, Portugal and Spain. On the other hand, the trade unions, although they had decided to participate, were almost absent from the demonstrations.

We must underline that a week before 14N, the Greek government, which is supported by the conservatives of *New Democracy*, the social democrats of PASOK and the *Democratic Left* (which was created in 2010, as a split from SYRIZA), has voted the new austerity package of 19 billion Euro. The trade

unions decided to go on a two-day general strike on 6 and 7 November against the austerity measures. These days were marked by massive demonstrations all over Greece, and especially in Athens. On 7 November (the voting day) the roads of Athens were filled by thousands who were demonstrating outside the parliament under heavy rain and – the usual – police brutality.

SYRIZA was the main force that supported the strike and strongly opposed, both in and outside the parliament, the new austerity package. The most remarkable moment was, when the 72 MPs of SYRIZA left the building of the parliament during the discussion about the new package and joined the thousands of demonstrators in Syntagma square, holding a huge banner which was the main message to the Greek neoliberal government: “You are ruining the country – Go away now”.

Greece is currently facing the reality of a new recession of its economy for another year, the official unemployment rate lies at 26% (with youth unemploy-

ment amounting to 58%), new tax measures are going to further suppress the incomes of the people, collective bargains are dead by law and there are new cuts on the welfare state.

Apart from that, the rise of the neo-Nazi *Golden Dawn* has created a new state of fear and terror against immigrants and activists. The anti-fascist movement is making some steps in order to face this danger, so there are plenty of assemblies in neighborhoods and demonstrations against the neo-Nazis.

After these developments, SYRIZA is now the biggest hope of the Greek working class, the youth, the poor and the unemployed. Alexis Tsipras, head of the coalition, has stated that there is no future for this government and its disastrous neoliberal policies, so there is an urgent need for the people to press the government to go into elections, as soon as possible. All recent polls show that on such an occasion SYRIZA will be topping the race.

Thoughts on the Situation in CEE and European Solidarity

14N Day in the Czech Republic

By Jiří Málek, SPED, Prague

With a certain distance, it is now possible to evaluate the participation of Czechs in Europe-wide actions against the advancing policy of cuts and the limitation of democracy. Two views are possible.

The first would contend that in this connection a number of events have taken place, even if on a different date: 17 November, a day that is significant in Czech history in two ways. It recalls a show of opposition by students and the whole of Czech society to German occupation in 1939 and subsequent anti-

student Nazi repression, which the international community responded to during World War II by the declaration of International Students' Day in London on 16 November 1941. At the same time, the Czech Republic on that day remembers the anniversary of the so-called “Velvet Revolution”, when the actions

of Prague students sparked anti-regime demonstrations that culminated in the fall of the Czechoslovak communist system in 1989. And it was just through turning out on the streets on that day that our citizens linked up with the European leftist campaign.

The second view is most likely far more precise. In general, Czech society, and I dare say societies in many other so-called post-communist countries, do not by and large feel that it is integrated into a European society of citizens. People have no need of Europe-wide solidarity. They still have the impression that in a united Europe their state and citizens are regarded as second class by many in the West. Many meet with a lack of understanding from Western Europeans with regard to their long-complicated and little-improving situation. Therefore the reaction of people from the East to Europe-wide appeals is on the whole tepid; they do not regard them as a solution to their problems.

Getting back to our Czech reality, the biggest demonstration, with a turnout of 20,000, was seen in Prague. Demonstrations with markedly smaller attendance and political impact were held in several other regional centres. The gatherings were directed against the government and the current establishment. At the same time, they represented not only a rejection of the government's cost-saving measures, budget consolidation (the reduction of debt to a level below 3% of GDP) and reforms (of the pension system, health care, the labour market, continuing privatisation of the public sector, etc.), but also an expression of disagreement (supported by two-thirds of the population) with unprecedented church restitution. This concerns a transfer of property that will turn the church

into the largest landowner and commits the state to paying the church billions of that so-called restitution over decades. A not inconsiderable share of the frustration of the majority of the population stems from "unconquerable" corruption and the inability or aversion of the governing elite to do anything about the problem. In Czech society – across all elements, classes and social groups – there is a growing sense of injustice and of the favouring of certain social groups to the detriment of the majority, including via the deprivation of democratic instruments. An ever-growing feeling prevails that it has already been decided who will pay for the so-called reforms and who is immune.

Political parties (of the Left), such as the Social Democrats and the Communists, did not officially take part in the Prague demonstration, which was organised by an association of various (mainly leftist) civic groups in conjunction with the unions, though they did support it. In his address, the chairman of the unions said that there was no mood among society and the unions for a general strike, because people are concerned about their jobs and social security. It is also because the classic strike movement does not have a strong appeal among the masses. The adversary today is not employers, or "capitalists". Indeed, that class is frequently just as frustrated with the country's social and political situation. Large companies, which also represent the core for the unions, treat their employees relatively well. The oppressed are the public services and their employees – not only those in education, health care, the social services and the civil service, but also fire and police officers. However, their political power is incomparably weaker. And many, with justification, expect that political

activities could well lead to their dismissal under the "streamlining" of the state.

Following regional elections in October, regional "governments" were created. Twelve of a total of 14 regions will be headed by Social Democrats. In 10 regions the radical Left, represented by candidates of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, will share in power in various forms. It will not be a simple situation, because the neo-liberal government cannot be expected to be accommodating to the orange-red regions. On the contrary, every mistake made by the Left will be welcomed by the governing elite and the Right. At the beginning of November, the government succeeded in stabilising its position in parliament when it managed to agree on strange deals with several "rebel" MPs from its own ranks, ensuring a majority of one or two votes with which to push through its plans. It has, for now, headed off early elections and the almost certain accession of the Left on the state-wide level.

The entire complicated domestic political situation was reflected in events marking 17 November. There was, therefore, little room for a European outlook and European solidarity. That is not a good thing and it needs to change. But it will require change on both sides. In so-called post-communist countries, citizens need to be persuaded that their problems are best solved in a united left-wing Europe. Meanwhile, "traditional" Western Europeans need to be convinced that their continent is much larger than they think, and that even in the part "far to the East" there are brothers and sisters who share with them a home that they need to take care of in unison.

14N Day in Italy

By Roberto Morea, *transform! italia*

On 14 November European mobilization in Italy has been divided into different events in major cities such as Milan, Turin, Genoa, and Rome. The demonstrations had many participants. The march in Rome brought together unions that joined the general strike (CGIL and Cobas) and students taking the streets

with tens of thousands of boys and girls from high school to college.

Only in Rome the march of students was fiercely charged by police departments to prevent a rapprochement to the places of political power. These interventions have been severely criticized

by a part of the press and, as always, are more striking than the content of events.

The secretary of CGIL participated in a demonstration in Terni, a city symbol of the Italian factories of heavy production, after which she gave a speech in which she emphasized the disaster of a year with the government of technocrats.

ParlaCon-Meeting in Paris

Convergences Resulting from the Work of the “Parliamentarians for an Alternative”

By Christine Mendelsohn, member of the EL Executive Board

Coordinating of left-wing parliamentarians in the struggle for re-founding Europe is one of the political targets which the *Party of the European Left* has set itself in Paris on 27 October.

70 parliamentarians from 14 countries elected at regional, national and European level gathered in Paris, amongst them Pierre Laurent who is elected senator of France.

The meeting was held at a moment when the governments had taken an additional step in the implementation of austerity policies by signing the Fiscal Pact and just before the protest against these policies, in particular the transnational strike on 14 November – which was also supported by the ETUC –, took place.

What the EL tried to achieve in the meeting was to enable the parliamentarians to exit from the isolation in which the liberal consensus has placed them in their regional and national assemblies and to highlight once more that alternatives to austerity exist.

During the meeting, the parliamentarians denounced the signing of the European fiscal pact, without any popular debate. The parliamentarians notice a continuous loss of trust of the population in their elected representatives. Several initiatives were described showing how some deputies are taking action to overcome this loss of sovereignty, for example:

- Appealing to the courts to show that the Fiscal Pact is contrary to European laws guaranteeing human rights and democracy;
- Coordinating at European level the positions of national deputies, as was done successfully on the bill for suppression of the right to strike;
- Appealing for a “legislative citizen’s initiative”.

The sharing of experiences among parliamentarians has brought about useful insights for the battles on different European political levels, against the policies of austerity and the European Budget Treaty.

According to a report by *transform! europe* (which also attended the meet-

ing), three axes of convergence emerged during the debate:

1. Democracy: Today there is a confiscation of powers and a restriction of freedoms, including the radical questioning of the rights of parliamentarians to define which policies to pursue. A response is required, all the more so as this development is leading to the end of political deliberation.

2. Social development: In opposition to austerity, elected persons on the Left have the responsibility to everywhere propose social development policies (harmonization of social rights, strengthening of public services), “social pacts” as opposed to the Fiscal Pact, etc.

3. Financing: It must be secured that social and human development is financed independently from the financial markets. This implies transforming the role of the ECB, which should finance governments and not banks, taxing the wealth, putting an end to tax evasion and tax havens, and creating a European public bank dedicated exclusively to financing social and ecological measures.

A document outlining the paths of another Europe will be proposed to EL parties and elected representatives, including the struggle for peace and against the installation of NATO military bases.

The presence of Europeans from other countries in our local and national initiatives should be enhanced in order to show solidarity and to pass the message that nobody is let alone in the struggle against austerity and against racist violence.

The sharing of reflections and initiatives for alternatives and solidarity, in support of the battles that we are waging

in our countries, could be useful in the battle against the extreme Right. They have already begun to break down the liberal consensus in creating broader alliances over proposals, and some parties of social transformation have advanced in the elections.

Together with *transform!* the EL would like to pursue an analysis based on the testimonies and proposals given at this meeting of the *Parliamentarians for an Alternative*: The exigency of neoliberal policies is identical all throughout Europe, but the pattern of its implementation is not the same in each country; the placing of wage-earners in competition among themselves, across

the continent, has violent and complicated consequences; the subjectivities of peoples are diverse and the political cultures different. Better understanding these aspects which emerged at this meeting, in particular on the strategies to adopt, would allow for the pursuit of this coordination, all while respecting diversities.

The work foreseen in common between *transform!* and EL for the year 2013 on the various scenarios for exiting the crisis in the EU should help us to better develop our strategies.

Municipal Elections in Finland

A Setback for “True Finns”

By Ruurik Holm, Left Forum

The first wave of success of the Finnish populist right seems to be over. In the municipal elections held on 28 October, the party got only 12.3 % of votes as compared to 19.0 % in the parliamentary elections of spring 2011.

The voter turnout of the elections was only 58.3 %. Some 30 years ago, the turnout in municipal elections was close to 80 %. It is clear that people are becoming more and more distanced from the political system and distrust in political parties is widely spread.

The results of the main parties were: The *National Coalition Party* (centre-right) 21.9 % (+1.5 % from the parliamentary elections of 2011), the *Social Democrats* 19.6 % (+0.5 %), the *Centre Party* 18.7 % (+2.9 %), the *True Finns*

12.3 % (-6.7 %), the *Greens* 8.5 % (+1.3 %), the *Left Alliance* 8.0 % (-0.1 %), the *Swedish People's Party* 4.7 % (+0.4 %) and the *Christian Democrats* 3.7 % (-0.3 %). The *Communist Party of Finland* obtained 0.4 % of the votes (+0.1 %).

Observe that the government parties improved their results from the 2011 parliamentary elections, except the *Left Alliance* and the *Christian Democrats*. It is still evident that sitting in the six-party government led by the centre-right Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen could have been much more devastating for the *Left Alliance*. Why was it not then?

The effects of the economic downturn have not fully stranded in Finland yet, and the exceptionally massive retirement of the so-called big generations of 1946-49 has kept unemployment on a reason-

able 7-8 % level. However, the party is on the way down rather than up and many analysers realize that the political mission of the party has to include much more than can be formulated in terms of the current government collaboration.

The positive side is that in the Helsinki district, the *Left Alliance* obtained a 10.1 % support, up 1.7 % from the 2008 municipal elections (however down 0.4 % from the parliamentary elections.) The party chairman Paavo Arhinmäki, who was a candidate in Helsinki, got the second most personal votes in all of Finland. The Helsinki district of *Left Alliance* has doubled its membership base during the past couple of years and is now the biggest district of the party.

Municipal Elections in Graz

Austrian Communists Score Amazing Success

By Barbara Steiner, *Transform!at*

The result of the local elections in Graz, the second largest Austrian city, was by the media and the political establishment perceived as a kind of political earthquake.

With 20.1 % of the votes (an increase of 8.9 %) the *Communist Party of Austria* came in as the second-largest fraction for the municipal government after the conservative People's Party (33.5 %). Thus the CPA did not only overtake the *Greens* (12 %) and the right-wing Freedom Party (13.9 %), but also the Social Democratic Party (15.3 %).

For some time now the Austrian Communists have been building a solid base in Graz local politics. Yet, the data of the first post-election survey seem to suggest that this time the results of the CPA are more than just an event of local political importance and rather give expression to the general frustration of Austrians with politics of the mainstream parties. Although Austria has been affected by the crisis much less dramatically than the Southern European

EU-states, a social change seems to be on the way also in Austria. According to the SORA market research institute, 75 % of those who voted for the CPA regarded the party as competent on the issue of housing. This corresponds to the party's profile on the local political level which has been developed in the competent work of many years; however, 60 % also consider the CPA as competent when it comes to fighting corruption and 40 % attest the party competence in questions of immigration and integration.

It is interesting to have a look at the votes distributed by income. Among workers, 22 % voted for the SDPA, while 24 % gave their vote to the CPA. This proves that the CPA is considered an alternative also among Social Democratic core voters. For the first time, it is not the German-nationalist Right who benefits from the decline of the Social Democracy – the party that has since 2007 provided the Chancellor – but a party of the Left.

The election results in Graz follow upon the success of the CPA in the Lower Austrian town of Krems which was also noticed throughout Austria. How sustainable the results in the elections for the Graz city council will turn out to be, is impossible to foretell yet. For the upcoming elections in Austria's southernmost federal province of Carinthia, a leftist alliance could be formed in which a former Social Democratic regional parliament member, representatives of the Slovene ethnic group and members of the CPA regional organisation have joined forces. The CPA has announced to work towards a similar alliance for the upcoming parliamentary elections. If the formation of such an alliance does not succeed, the CPA will stand for elections as a list of its own.

Detailed results and analysis of voting transfer at:

<http://derstandard.at/1353207317843/Die-Graz-Wahl-im-Detail> (in German)

Announcements

New Publication I

Journal *transform!* vol. 11

“Power Relations in Europe”

The English edition of the *transform!* magazine vol. 11 has been published recently. Soon also editions in French, German, Greek, Czech and Spanish will be available. The new issue is on power relations in Europe.

Contents (English edition)

- Lutz Holzinger: *Editorial*

Leading Articles

- Eric Hobsbawm: *The Communist Manifesto in Perspective*
- Erik Olin Wright: *Class Struggle and Class Compromise in the Era of Stagnation and Crisis*

Focus on the EU and the German Model

- Jean-Marie Harribey: *The Stability Treaty – An Error or a Crime?*
- Lutz Brangsch: *The “Hard Core” of European Integration*
- Joachim Bischoff/Richard Detje: *Germany as Hegemonic Power: The Crisis of European Integration*

- Roland D. Kulke: *Recent Developments Inside the EU and its Implications for European Foreign Trade Policy*
- Steffen Lehndorff: *German Capitalism and the European Crisis: Part of the Solution or Part of the Problem?*
- Marica Frangakis: *The Puzzle of European Integration: Will Greece Be the First Piece to Be Lost?*

Challenges for the Left

- Elisabeth Gauthier: *Europe: Existential Danger – New Political Challenges*
- Pierre Dardot: *About Hegemony*
- Gabi Zimmer: *For a Left Showing Solidarity*
- Christoforos Vernardakis: *A Class interpretation of the Greece Election 2012*
- Alex Demirović: *Democracy in Times of Crisis*
- Aleksander Buzgalin: *Left Political Forces in Russia*
- Kaisu Suopanki: *Basic Income in Finland*

Engagement of the Youth

- Michel Vakalalouis: *Political Engagement of the Youth*
- Laval University: *Quebec Spring – The Roots of Resistance*

Review

- Lutz Brangsch: *Asbjørn Wahl on the Rise and Fall of the Welfare State*

Ordering the journal

transform! european journal for alternative thinking and political dialogue is published twice a year. A single issue can be ordered at the price of EUR 8 or a subscription at EUR 15 (incl. postage) for two issues p.a.

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New Publication II

Journal *transform!* vol. 10 in Italian

“Democrazia: una sfida per l’ Europa”

transform! Italia has published an Italian edition of the *transform!* magazine issue No. 10. The title of the volume is “Democrazia: una sfida per l’ Europa”.

The journal *transform!* is published twice a year in English, Greek, French and German. In autumn 2012 there have also been published a Spanish and a Czech edition.

Contents (Italian edition)

- Roberto Morea: *Editoriale*

La sinistra

- Bob Jessop: *Strategia della sinistra*

- Francisco Louçã: *La crisi dell'Europa: elementi di una strategia politica*
- Dieter Klein: *Un racconto della sinistra*
- CMS Stockholm: *L'impossibilità del riformismo*
- Joachim Bischoff / Richard Detje: *Democrazia economica – un'alternativa per l'Europa?*
- Janine Guespin-Michel: *Quale scienza per quale democrazia?*
- Un'intervista con Rena Dourou: *La sinistra, i giovani e la politica*

La crisi della democrazia

- Hervé Kempf: *Dall'oligarchia alla nuova sfida della politica globale*
- Constantinos Tsoukalas: *La democrazia in crisi*
- Franco Russo: *UE: fuga dalla democrazia*

Battaglie per la democrazia

Europa: crisi e alternative

- Walter Baier / Elisabeth Gauthier: *Lavorare per la rifondazione dell'Europa*
- Christiane Marty: *La donne di fronte alla crisi e alla austerità*
- Jacques Rigaudiat: *Possiamo immaginare un New Deal europeo per il XXI secolo?*

- Trevor Evans: *Una risposta progressista europea alla crisi dell'eurozona*
- JSC 2012: *Documento: Resistere alla dittatura finanziaria. Rivendicare la democrazia e i diritti sociali!*

Contributi dal mondo

- Horst Kahrs: *Pirati a Berlino*
- Alessandra Mecozzi: *Palestina*

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6th Annual Lecture in Memory of Nicos Poulantzas, with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Athens, 20 December 2012

By Alexandros Ballas, political scientist, NPI

On 20 December the Nicos Poulantzas Institute will host an event with the distinguished academic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as central speaker. She will give the 6th Annual Lecture in memory of Nicos Poulantzas, titled "Europe and the Bull Market".

The Lecture will be given at 7:00 pm in the hall of the Goethe Institute in Athens.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was born on 24 February 1942 in Calcutta, India. After completing her school education in the *St. John's Diocesan Girls' Higher Secondary School*, she received an undergraduate degree in English at the Presidency College of the University of Calcutta (1959), graduating with first class honours and receiving gold medals for English and Bengali literature. After this, she attended Cornell University, USA, where she completed her M.A. in English and pursued her Ph.D. in comparative literature, while teaching at the University of Iowa. In March 2007 G. Spivak became University Professor at

Columbia University, making her the only Indian woman to be bestowed the University's highest honour in its 264-year history. In June 2012, she was awarded the Kyoto Prize for arts and philosophy.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a world renowned critical theorist whose work has been particularly influential to the field of post-colonialism, for which she is often referred to as having been a pioneer. She is best known for her contemporary cultural and critical theories to challenge the "legacy of colonialism" and the way readers engage with literature and culture. She often focuses on the cultural texts of those who are marginalized by dominant western culture: the new immigrant, the working class and women. Her research interests focus on feminism, Marxism, deconstruction and globalization. She challenges ideas such as that the "West is more democratic, civilized and so ultimately more developed than the rest of the world", or that "the current post-colonial time is

more progressive than earlier historical periods".

Her views are loosely associated with those of the *Subaltern Studies Collective*, a group of Marxist intellectuals based in India, Britain, and the United States, who is interested in the histories of the unrepresented masses. Often labelled "Marxist, feminist, deconstructionist", Spivak is anything but single-minded. Her continually evolving work spans multiple disciplines and bridges the gap between academia and activism.

She is credited with pioneering feminist and post-colonial studies within global academia, beginning with her 1976 translation of Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie*. In 1985, she published the essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, about the classes that live at a distance from social mobility, considered a founding text of post-colonialism. She has been the author and translator of more than 17 books including: *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics, Outside in the Teaching Machine, Death*

of a Discipline, Other Asias, and An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization.

Since 1986 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has also been an active supporter of rural education, as well as socio-ecological movements, both through her theoretical research but also by being a philanthropist. She has had a life of civic

engagement, focused especially on international women's movements and rural education in India. She founded the *Pares Chandra and Sivani Chakravorty Memorial Literacy Project* in 1997 to support her efforts, to train teachers for primary education for children in rural India. The project currently operates schools in rural areas of West Bengal, in

India. In 2012 she has donated the money from her Kyoto Prize for lifetime achievement in arts and philosophy, to continue funding the project.

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<http://www.poulantzas.gr/>

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