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**Statement of purpose**

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

**Submission guidelines**

Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: [review\\_editor@platypus1917.org](mailto:review_editor@platypus1917.org). All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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# The Platypus Review

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## Anarchism through Bakunin, continued from page 1

19th century France. This was fully recognized by perhaps the best-known and greatest representative of modern anarchism: Michael Bakunin.

### Bakunin: the almost complete anarchist

Michael Bakunin was born in 1814 to a liberal family of landed nobility, and like many more liberal families of this class, members were deeply involved in the December plot to overthrow the Czar in the late 1820s (in fact, a second cousin of Bakunin's mother was one of those hanged in the repression that followed).<sup>11</sup>

Bakunin's life and the thought that suffused his life are so fully enlivened with an anarchist animus that it is important to pay more attention to biographical detail in his case. That the adult Bakunin was the almost complete anarchist there can be little doubt. Apparently burning with revolutionary fervor at every moment, he spent a lifetime in political activity and never once became involved in work of a usual kind. He wrote little and did not develop a system of integrated principles, but this in itself is symptomatic of the anarchist animus, since one of its major postulates is the rejection of too fixed a doctrine. This often makes anarchism much more at one with the personality of the anarchist than with the exposition of a doctrinal system. Carr captures this point when he writes:

The personality of Bakunin is one of those phenomena which cannot be explained in rational terms. His ambitions were ill-defined and chimerical. His writings, though "rigorous," were incoherent, and, both in his writings and his actions, he seldom finished what he had begun. His chequered career was void of any concrete attainment. Yet he produced on his contemporaries an impression of overwhelming vitality and power.<sup>12</sup>

Yet there must be some at least minimal strains of thought which allow us to call acts and thoughts by the name of anarchism and these strains can be found in Bakunin. The emphasis on strains of thought is important here since it is not only the case that Bakunin lacked theoretical coherence; his type of thought makes a virtue out of such incoherence. The whole thrust of his theorizing is to be anti-theory; it expresses the anarchist credo as an aggregate of spontaneous passions. Carr seems to suggest that this confusion and incoherence is simply a matter of Bakunin's personality or circumstance, but that is not the case. These characteristics appear intrinsic to the outlook for which Bakunin so clearly stands. This outlook is defined by this most representative practitioner, by his particular spirit and emotional texture; this texture then is underpinned by specific ideological components by which anarchism may be defined.

At the centre of Bakunin's anarchism is hostility to all authority and sympathy for those who are actually or potentially hostile to authority. While suspicion of authority is connected to liberalism and to other creeds, the engagement with underdogs against their more powerful oppressors is more unique to anarchism. Whenever there was an issue of oppression of one group by others with power, Bakunin felt it incumbent upon himself to leap into the fray. Since the variety of oppressed groups is usually very great, so Bakunin's life is wondrous in the degree to which it flits about from place to place and from issue to issue. The picture of Bakunin that emerges is that of a mobile revolutionary who, when rebellion was breaking out everywhere in 1848, left Paris to make revolution in Posen and then on to Dresden, having no plan and no connections, with just the spirit of revolution to guide him.<sup>13</sup> At that time immersed in Pan-Slav nationalism, he jumped from a moderate Pan-Slav congress where he represented Russia virtually alone (since there was no organization which authorized his presence) to the barricades of a student-worker insurrection in Prague. When this was put down, he simply slipped away. From Bakunin we confirm this image of anarchism as not so much a doctrine as an individual spirit of restless rebellion, with the anarchist more significant than the principles that s/he may espouse.

Yet it would be unfair to Bakunin to claim that he lacks all coherence, as certain enduring issues animated defining stages of his life. During the bourgeois revolutions of 1848, Bakunin made more purely liberal demands of the social order; these demands included the abolition of serfdom, aristocracy, and inherited privilege, those demands which were the core of the French Revolution in the 18th century. With the defeat of these revolutions, Bakunin, along with all those who were radicalized by the meekness and cowardice shown by the bourgeoisie in its own revolution, changed from a more narrowly political revolutionary to a more totally social one. With Marx, Bakunin saw the need for a total transformation of society rather than reform of its political institutions. And, again with Marx, Bakunin sometimes emphasized the centrality of class conflict as the motor force in this transformation. That the bottom of society is exploited and oppressed, and that this bottom has the right, indeed the duty, to overthrow the ruling elite in order to usher in a new world of equity and justice is a position upon which there was solid agreement between Bakunin and Marx. And on this basis, there evolved many points of alliance and common political work in the lives of these great protagonists.

Much of Bakunin's thoughts point in the direction of a rationalism which, like Marx's thought, does lead to some positive stances towards science. Bakunin's acceptance of the need for technical development as the precondition for overall social development likewise elevated the scientific spirit. Unlike the anarchist tendencies of Thoreau, Gandhi, or some modern communists, Bakunin was no exponent of a pristine return to a more natural, simpler life. For Bakunin, as for most modern anarchists, natural science as the handmaiden of technical advancement was both necessary and right.

Yet Bakunin had fundamental differences with Marx, differences which in the end made mortal enemies of them. Whereas Marx and Marxism have always seen themselves as a continuation of the bourgeois revolution-

ary engagement with reason (only rejecting that revolution because it was not reasonable enough), anarchism has often rejected reason in the name and spirit of instinct and raw passion. Bakunin is the prototype of this type of rebellion. For Bakunin, all conventions and laws are simply limits to the instinctive human desire for freedom from all limits. The ideal of freedom is to be realized by continual rebellion against all established order. To be human and free is to be undefined, unpredictable, and against all authority. Bakunin therefore demonstrated a particular revision to the application of science to revolutionary social change.

### Bakunin's Romantic Rebellion

The early 19th century was set off from other times by its reaction to the harbinger of the modern era, the French Revolution. Ushering in liberal capitalism with its great promise of prosperity, peace, and cooperation for all, it fell short in its actualization. Early capitalist industrialization in Europe was so gassy in its exploitation of labor and its creation of brutalizing, slum-ridden cities that it set rebellion in motion everywhere. Marx represented the most optimistic prognostications to flow from the hiatus between liberal promise and capitalist reality. By applying the tools of a rationalist science to human history, Marx uncovered the agents of progress in the very disasters produced by industrial capitalist development. For Marx, science and technology were positive, but limited by their bourgeois nature. Therefore, the task was to deepen our understanding of social reality by applying a new scientific method and a different political action to that reality. In fundamental ways, Marxism was a progressive development of the thought and actions activated by bourgeois society itself—which, indeed, was something of which Marxism was accused by Bakunin.

Another rebellion was generated by this early crisis in industrial capitalism: the romantic rebellion. While accepting the tremendous advances produced by natural science in its application to technology—to reject these would have been foolhardy and only occurred amongst a hardy minority of medievalists—this rebellion occurred mainly in the realm of history and social thought. Bakunin's thought on these matters appears rooted in this particular 19th century rebellion. It swelled up the great divide between nature and society, between the objectivity of science and the alleged freedom of human action. The romantic rebellion against science and technical progress could not frontal attack the obvious advances made in natural science because the Newtonian revolution in physics (and later the Darwinian in biology) became too firmly rooted in popular and intellectual consciousness. But capitalist society had clearly demarcated the private life of intimacy and emotion from the public life of far-flung markets and work outside the home; and for the romantics, the latter became the institutionalized focus of objectivity and science, such that science and industrial work took on the coloration of dullness, order, obedience, and emotionless routine. Science and its concomitant industrial development was seen as suffused with all that was not human.

In contradiction to the objectivity of the world of nature, there arose amongst the romantics the view that the world of the really human, the historically human, was not subject to scientific analysis. Since scientific analysis was delimited to objectified nature which, in its predictability was inhuman, the truly human became the agent of pure subjectivity, of freedom from all limitations except "natural" ones. Human behavior is here not the predictable, determinable phenomenon that is amenable to science; instead it is more whimsical, indeterminate, and willful. And human history can never be seen in the law-like terms of science; it cannot be analyzed as exhibiting predictable tendencies, but can only be grasped by the intuitive understanding of free creatures. Bakunin's anarchism is clearly situated in this romantic conception of human behavior and human history. Bakunin did not merely reject particular substantive elements of Marx's scientific analysis of history; he objected to the entire project itself, disclaiming the very possibility of a science of history and considering the very attempt to comprehend humans in this way to be wrongheaded.

The first human reality for Bakunin is the free individual whose desires and passions will lead to a free society after individuals decide to do away with the corrupting social powers that delimit their inherent freedom. Bakunin believed that any attempt to develop a science of society was tyrannical since it would undercut the natural human instinct to revolt against any system of rules. Social science can do little but articulate abstract laws, which cannot grasp living concrete individuals.<sup>14</sup> When Bakunin proclaimed the need for science to become everyone's property<sup>15</sup>, he meant natural science, for this would mean the freeing of humans from pretensions to social science. It is on this basis that Bakunin saw Marxism as not merely false, but as part of the ideological apparatus of oppression within his intellectual climate. To Bakunin, rebellion against all conformity to rules, even intellectual rules which construct knowledge, is of the essence of that freedom to which all should aspire. If Bakunin hated anything more than the state, he hated the idea of a science of society and any attempt to organize around such a science.<sup>16</sup>

### Bakunin, Marx, and the First International

Bakunin's long involvement with the First International initiated by Marx could rightly be seen as a conscious attempt at undermining the whole organizational thrust of that project. As justification for this position, Bakunin condemned Marxism as intrinsically tyrannical. Marx himself, said Bakunin, "lacks the instinct of liberty—he remains from head to foot an authoritarian."<sup>17</sup> In the most direct way, Bakunin elaborated upon the liberal credo that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely: "Nothing is as dangerous for man's personal morality as the habit of commanding."<sup>18</sup> Bakunin's distrust did not stop at state power; it extended to any permanent groupings consciously utilizing and seeking power. He saved his most striking barbs for those revolutionary groups which were conscientiously political. If, argued Bakunin, a

revolutionary group means to organize for the control of state power, that political group and the regime it assumes, if successful, will be no different from all other states. Bakunin warned that Marx's state "will be the reign of scientific intelligence, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant, and elitist, conditions was seen by Bakunin as a dampening



The Paris Commune

a piecemeal fashion through relatively stable organizations for their dull, plodding reformism, for their absence of true revolutionary militancy. Thus Marx's engagement with the construction of working class trade unions involved with bettering immediate economic conditions was seen by Bakunin as a dampening

## Anarchism through Bakunin, continued from page 3

demands in leading toward his desired revolution and, while remaining antipathetic to the idea of organization in general, accepted the necessity of trade union organization for the working class. In his commitment to localism as the ultimate source of real democracy, he also saw trade unions as the potential building blocks of the future (and thereby prepared the way for later syndicalist directions).

### The State

In his attitude toward more distinctly political activity, Bakunin revealed a more fundamental intransigence. He was not so foolish as to reject politics in its broadest sense, since he clearly realized that ideological positions of all stamps have implications for social change. Rather, he opposed all actions which could be defined as political in the narrower sense of accepting the need for state power. Here Bakunin reveals the most basic idea of all anarchism, the idea which demarcates it from all other creeds: the state is the source and origin of all evil. Any actions which accept the presence of the state, either implicitly or explicitly, are counterrevolutionary. "The State," wrote Bakunin, "is the most flagrant, the most cynical, and the most complete negation of humanity."<sup>19</sup>

There is often misunderstanding of the difference between anarchism and Marxism on the question of the state since both viewpoints consider the state as a pernicious agency and both favor its dissolution. Marxism sees the origin of a centralized organization of violence (Marxism's definition of a state) in the rise of class societies and sees its dissolution to result only from the creation of a classless society. Anarchism, as stated before, does not appear to have a theory of the state (or of classes), which leads it to postulate that a ruling class which controls property and a ruling group which controls power are often one and the same thing. Nonetheless, in much anarchist writing, the state is given primacy over all other institutions and is therefore seen as the most fundamental roadblock to social transformation. Thus, in discussing the elements of a successful revolution, Bakunin argued that "it is necessary to attack conditions and material goods; to destroy property and the State."<sup>20</sup> But Bakunin went further: "The revolution as we understand it will have to destroy the State and all the institutions of the State, radically and completely, from its very first day."<sup>21</sup>

On the basis of this position, Bakunin attacked Marxism for its acceptance of a state form upon the accession to revolutionary power. Revolutionary Marxism (of both Marx in his discussion of the Paris Commune and Lenin in *State and Revolution*) saw a socialist revolution as demanding the destruction of the old state, the bourgeois state, but not the destruction of all states at once; instead, a new type of transitional state must be created, a working class state, which is supposed to prepare the way for future classlessness and statelessness. Bakunin saw his most pointed barbs for this idea. Any revolution, he wrote, which intends to construct a "powerfully centralized revolutionary State, would inevitably result in military dictatorship and a new master."<sup>22</sup> Thus, for Bakunin and for all anarchism, the Marxist idea that the working class should fight for state power is considered a fundamentally counterrevolutionary idea. Whether the state proclaims itself capitalist or socialist makes little difference since its very existence makes that state equally pernicious. That the 20th century revolutions that created proletarian states have moved neither to classlessness nor statelessness has clearly strengthened the prophecies of doom on the score articulated by anarchism since Bakunin.

At the time of the split in the International Workingmen's Association between Bakunin and Marx near the end of Bakunin's life, Bakunin advocated for all political questions to be banned from the International and argued that "we should seek to strengthen this association solely in the field of economic solidarity."<sup>23</sup>

Since Bakunin demonstrated a reluctance to get involved with daily economic demands because their satisfaction could and would lead to cooptation, what could he have meant by the "field of economic solidarity"? This phrase can be understood only by recognizing that Bakunin's real emphasis is on the *solidarity*. But again, what could he have meant by a solidarity that rejected any program, whether economic or political, which might build and maintain collective strength? Solidarity in Bakunin's sense could only have meant the unity and collective spirit that arises and continues to percolate from the spontaneous rebellion of working people as a dominated class. Only one aspect of that solidarity interested Bakunin: that aspect which existed in a pure form and, with a mighty violent swoop, would destroy the old order and usher in the new. While it waits for the day of reckoning, anarchism has the right and the duty to disparage and destroy all organizations which work upon the idea that solidarity is a social process which, to be built, must have a developmental plan based on theory and analysis. In response to this position, Marx castigated Bakunin for being a destructive force in the First International.

Lenin, writing at a time when the issue of opportunism was more pointed and directly involved in the problem of revolutionary transformation, was also forceful in his condemnation of anarchism. He asserted that anarchism has "no doctrine, revolutionary teaching, or theory—Fragmentation of the working class movement.—Complete fiasco in the experiments of the revolutionary movement (Proudhonism, 1871; Bakuninism; 1873).—Subordination of the working class to bourgeois politics in the guise of the negation of politics."<sup>24</sup> The allusion by Lenin to bourgeois politics refers to the overall consequences of anarchist activity—that it results in the conserving of the bourgeois order of things. Marxism would consider that anarchism's emphasis on individual liberty means that its origins and manifestations are petit bourgeois i.e., rooted in small property ideology.

Lenin saw the growth and influence of anarchism as due to the immaturity of the working class movement;

according to Lenin, anarchism was a passing thing

which would disappear with the growing strength and political maturity of the working class. In response to questions about anarchists in Germany following the Russian Revolution, Lenin wrote:

The true program, I will repeat it a thousand times, is quite simple and moderate: the organization of solidarity in the economic struggle of labour against Capitalism. On this foundation, at first exclusively natural, will rise the intellectual and moral pillars of the new society.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps Bakunin felt this comment was necessary to justify his own right to revolutionary legitimacy (since he originated in the Russian landowning class), but it was a strange admission from one who downgraded all theory and leadership in the name of popular revolutionary instinct.

Two major anarchist ideas flow from the glorification of spontaneous rebellion. The first is distrust of all social groupings other than the most local ones, for if instinct is the source of rebellion, then this only occurs

in its true form at the immediate and face-to-face level. The second idea is the expectation that broader types of social organization in a future society will involve the automatic and voluntary confederation of local groups; if the state is to be rejected in all its forms then only voluntary association can be the glue of wider social formations. By seeing rebellion in this instinctive form not only as the source of revolutionary change, but furthermore as the microcosmic blueprint for all future change, the anarchist tends to see him/herself and his/her closest political grouping as the living locus of the new society. As a consequence, this seemingly most broad-spirited and often internationalist viewpoint, by rejecting analysis and systematically presented ideas about groups, processes, and future change, actually often ends up with little more than each anarchist strongly holding the sentiment that "the revolution, C'est Moi"; or, if not exactly Moi, then, at best, "the revolution, C'est Nous." Bakunin's thoughts lead in this direction near the beginning of modern anarchism, and this sentiment is more forcefully articulated in later manifestations, especially among the New Left of the 1960s.

If anarchism is more of a mood than a stable theory and analysis, then the core political emphasis of this mood is perpetual impatience. Anarchism cannot be seen, then, as a concealed doctrine which fights and either clearly wins or clearly loses; rather, anarchism is a persistent undercutting of liberalism, which is always part of a society that nurtures liberal individualism and will remain so as long as the liberal tradition holds sway in the world. **I**

1. David Apter, "The Old Anarchism and The New – Some Comments," in *Anarchism Today*, eds. David Apter and James Joll (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1972), 4-5.

2. Ibid.

3. James Joll, "Anarchism – A Living Tradition," in Apter and Joll (eds.), *Anarchism Today*, 260.

4. Joll says just this when he claims that "anarchism owes more to conventional liberalism than some of its exponents are willing to admit." *Ibid.*

5. Atindranath Bose, *A History of Anarchism* (Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd., 1967), 77.

6. *Ibid.*, 82.

7. *Ibid.*, 108-109.

8. *Ibid.*, 113.

9. *Ibid.*, 103.

10. That solipsism and even nihilism are not adventitious to anarchism is represented most clearly in Stirner, the quintessential individualist anarchist, who postulates himself as the beginning and end of all existence.

11. E.H. Carr, Michael Bakunin (London: Macmillan and Co., 1937), 5.

12. *Ibid.*, 143.

13. *Ibid.*, 153.

14. Mikhail Bakunin, "God and the State" in Bakunin on Anarchy, ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969).

15. *Ibid.*, 232.

16. E.H. Carr, Michael Bakunin, 437.

17. James Guillaume, "Biography of Bakunin" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 26.

18. Mikhail Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 145.

19. Mikhail Bakunin, "The International and Karl Marx" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 319.

20. Mikhail Bakunin, "The Policy of the International" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 166.

21. Mikhail Bakunin, "The Program of the International Brotherhood" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 154-55.

22. E.H. Carr, Michael Bakunin, 182.

23. Mikhail Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 186.

24. *Ibid.*, 189.

25. *Ibid.*, 192.

26. *Ibid.*, 195.

27. Mikhail Bakunin, "The Program of the Alliance" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 254.

28. Mikhail Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 133.

29. Mikhail Bakunin, "The Program of the International Brotherhood" in Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 151-152.

30. *Ibid.*,

# Trotskyism in Greece

## An interview with Andros Payiatsos

Nikos Manousakis

*On November 22, 2013, Nikos Manousakis, a member of the Platypus Affiliated Society in Thessaloniki, interviewed Andros Payiatsos, Secretary General of Xekinima or "Start," the Greek chapter of the Committee for a Workers' International [CWI]. What follows is an edited transcript of their conversation.*

**Nikos Manousakis:** Tell us about the Greek chapter of the CWI. What are its involvements politically, its connection to the wider international organization, its ideological background, and what are Start's aims in present-day Greece?

**Andros Payiatsos:** Xekinima, which can be translated as Start, has a long history that dates back to the period of the Junta, the military dictatorship from 1967-1974. It was originally a small group that operated illegally under the Dictatorship of the Generals and, in 1974, joined the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). Xekinima had evolved in a Trotskyist direction, although not with full clarity at the outset, and was involved in the uprising of the Athens Polytechnic in the autumn of 1973. Start members joined PASOK when the latter was created in 1974. Around the same time Start came into contact with the British counterpart of the CWI, then called Militant, which was working inside British Labour. The group has had an interesting and a complex development since then. In its initial period it was very successful within PASOK, which, in the 1970s, was an entirely different organization from the one we see today—with thousands of working class fighters and radical left activists. It was also very bureaucratic. But Xekinima was very quickly expelled. From 1975 onwards, Xekinima has worked as a tendency outside PASOK, although it directs itself at the PASOK rank and file.

Then in the late 1980s, a discussion began to develop in Greece and internationally about the character of working class parties, labor parties, Social Democratic parties, etc., and there was a move in the direction of abandoning them. So Xekinima, too, shifted toward independent work and abandoned any kind of relationship with PASOK. Furthermore, in the 1990s, Xekinima came out openly as an independent organization with a stated aim of rebuilding the forces of the Left, describing PASOK as a bourgeois party, which had abandoned any link to working class interests.

The 1990s were a very difficult period. The Left, as a whole, was in crisis as a result of the collapse of Stalinism and was confronted by a major ideological offensive by the bourgeoisie globally. It is fair to say that the entire Left was in crisis, even in tatters! Many organizations split and Xekinima also suffered from such cleavages.

**NM:** This in spite of the fact that Xekinima had a different ideological or Trotskyist background?

**AP:** The Trotskyist current, although it was the only one that had predicted Stalinism was a temporary historical phenomenon and that it would collapse in one way or another, nevertheless paid the cost of the collapse of the Stalinist left. Because the collapse had an adverse, negative effect on the struggles of the working class, on the consciousness of the working class, on leftist working class organizations, and on the leadership of the trade unions, etc.

**NM:** So you understand 1989 to have been a turning point for the Left in Greece and globally?

**AP:** Without any doubt! And Xekinima paid a cost for 1989. Actually, it is fair to say that Xekinima was able to restart, to rebuild its forces, having contracted to a small group by the late-1990s, when leftist movements found new life as the repercussions of the financial-economic crisis in southeast Asia were felt internationally, by the effects of the anti-globalization movement, and then the anti-war movement. It was this rebirth that followed the collapse of the Left in 1989 that also allowed Xekinima to rebuild its forces and become one of the significant forces on the Left today.



A demonstration in Athens on November 18th, 2013. Banner reads: "It's [rather] us or them" and Xekinima.

**NM:** How would you define the present goals of Xekinima?

**AP:** The general goal, of course, is the transformation of society. Capitalism is a deadly system leading to the barbarism that we experience today. How we get to transform society is the main question and a difficult one because the entire Left claims, in one way or another, that they are struggling for a socialist society, but historically the Left has proved incapable of achieving that aim. We have two goals given the present

state of things in Greece: The first is to develop a transitional program that reflects the needs of today, define the aims for the working class to fight for, launch proposals about how that fight should develop, in other words a plan of struggle for the working class in order to be able to face this barbaric attack by the *troika* and the Greek bourgeoisie. The second is to try to bring together the forces which agree on the fundamental tasks of our epoch, I mean forces from the rest of the Left with an orientation toward revolutionary Marxism.

The Greek left is in turmoil—reflecting the depth of the current crisis on the one hand and the deficiencies of the [international] Left on the other. What is very important, however, is that there are significant forces inside all of the major left formations which are in opposition to the ideas or political lines of the central leaderships of those left formations. Such forces exist inside SYRIZA, but also inside the ANTARSYA coalition, and the KKE, the Greek Communist Party. These forces understand the necessity of a transitional program as I have described above and, also, the vital importance of the United Front.

Though a certain section of our membership is also in SYRIZA, Xekinima, stands outside, openly raising the call for various oppositional currents within the left parties to come together to form a common "arc" or "center" to coordinate their efforts. Xekinima, for example, plays a major role in the Initiative 1000, a collaboration of different segments of SYRIZA and ANTARSYA together with other groups on the Marxist left.

**NM:** How do you comprehend the electoral rise of SYRIZA? Do you think that SYRIZA's party formula—a broad coalition with different tendencies—is the most appropriate and radical party form today?

**AP:** The only way for the new, left formations like SYRIZA to develop in the present epoch is through a federal structure that allows different groups, different parties, and different tendencies to coexist, together with individual members. Whereas in the past, both the "Communist" parties and the "Socialist" parties developed huge bureaucracies that did not allow free discussion and free exchange of ideas inside the political organizations of the working class. Democracy today is not just an abstract issue; democracy inside the parties of the Left and the movements is essential.

**NM:** Trotsky had remarked that the disintegration of the revolution in the Soviet Union was not a result of the lack of democracy, but the failure of the October Revolution to expand in the most developed countries, to be international.

**AP:** "Socialism" without worker's democracy in the Soviet Union would not have been socialism, and socialism, without the expansion of the revolution beyond the Soviet Union, would also have been impossible. Trotsky explained the consequences of the lack of democracy inside the party and the Soviet Union quite well, but it's also clear from Lenin that the conditions for socialism in its mature form, for working class democracy, did not exist in the Soviet Union on its own and in isolation.

**NM:** Unfortunately, however, we don't have a revolution today to expand on. Would you argue that the lack of democracy is today the main problem that confronts communist parties and a party like SYRIZA?

**AP:** I would say that the main problem is the political line. But then democracy comes as a means to give voice to the rank and file, to allow the rank and file control at the leadership level, so that, among other things, it can correct the mistakes of the political line of the leadership. The policies of the Greek Communist Party, for example, are very openly seen as totally wrong: sectarianism, isolationism, and centralism. The role of democracy within the KKE would be a means by

which the rank and file would be able to correct the policies of the leadership. That is why the leadership will never allow internal democracy inside the KKE. Democracy can only be achieved through a revolt of the rank and file, and this of course would make a split inevitable. However, even within SYRIZA, democracy is clearly beginning to contract as the leadership is approaching governmental power.

For the new, left formations that have evolved internationally in the last two decades, it is very important to safeguard internal democracy, which is a

weapon of crucial importance against the danger of unchecked bureaucratization.

**NM:** You consider Syriza to be a reformist party despite the fact that its rise was the expression of a "left turn" in Greece. What was Start's contribution to this turn?

**AP:** SYRIZA is on the left of the political spectrum. But actually SYRIZA is a left party that is moving quickly to the right, abandoning its previous positions and watering down its radicalism, but that is a different issue.

Xekinima was one of the constituents of SYRIZA between 2008 and 2010. Xekinima fought for a radical, left, socialist program, and aligned with other forces and rank and file members to form the "second wave," as it came to be known. Many of the ideas of the "second wave" were later taken up by SYRIZA. Xekinima distanced itself from SYRIZA at beginning of 2011 because the reformism of SYRIZA's leadership isolated us from the most radical layers of society and workers in the forefront of the struggles could see the limitations of SYRIZA. We still collaborate with SYRIZA on many levels, such as electoral politics. Above all we have very close relations with the left opposition within SYRIZA and through, for example, the Initiative of the 1000, the opposition inside ANTARSYA and the expelled activists of the KKE.

**NM:** From what you are saying, it seems that Xekinima supports left unity, so how would you define, in social terms, the successful unity of the Left? What would be the distinct role of political parties and organizations like Xekinima in a united left?

**AP:** We need to elaborate what we mean by unity, because the idea of a "united left" gives the impression of a unified party, which is not quite what I mean. What is required is the Left's collaboration in creating new political formations of the working class. You may call this a united left, but within which there would be full freedom for the existence of small parties, different groups, different tendencies, and many individuals. So, if we use the term, a united left, we have to understand it as a federation that would allow all the different trends on the Left to come together without prohibitions and without having to sacrifice their ideological, political, or organizational independence.

**NM:** How do the working masses express themselves today? There are no soviets today, nor are there any workers' councils in Greece, so what are the forms through which the masses express their discontents and demands?

**AP:** There are always many paradoxes and contradictions in every epoch. For example, one way in which the masses are expressing themselves today is by turning to SYRIZA. SYRIZA stood first in the polls. At the same time, there is huge suspicion and doubt about SYRIZA, to say the least, amongst the masses. SYRIZA is a new phenomenon. We didn't have it in the 1970s and we didn't have it in the 1930s. If you compare SYRIZA in its earliest stages to PASOK in its early stages, very different pictures emerge. The masses don't have the kind of illusions they had in the past, they don't, of course, expect socialism, but they also don't even trust that the leadership will deliver what they promise.

SYRIZA today reminds us of PASOK in the late-1980s. It's a party that is prematurely old. Even before coming into government, they have made all the compromises that were made by social democracy whenever it took power in the past. The analogy is not entirely accurate, because the epochs are different, but it has a certain usefulness.

**NM:** Does the similarity between SYRIZA, as a prematurely old party, and PASOK, in the late-1980s, stem from the fact that there is a revolutionary process going on right now that is accelerating this aging process?

**AP:** There are two factors here. The first is the depth of the current crisis. The crisis is so deep that it is putting severe pressure on the leadership of the working class and the political formations of the Left. The second factor is that revolutionary forces, revolutionary Marxism internationally, is very weak. This is a factor that is reflected in various ways in Greece and inside SYRIZA, as well as allowing the right-wing, reformist leadership of SYRIZA to win the upper hand.

It would be wrong to describe Greece as being on the verge of a revolution, but there is a revolutionary potential in Greek society, a potential for the working class to explosively assert itself—Greece is like a volcano. What is stopping it is, above all else, is the leadership of the trade union movement, which has played an absolutely treacherous role, and the "deficiencies" of the leftist parties, both the KKE and SYRIZA.

**NM:** SYRIZA fights for a left government. What do you think of this demand? How is this demand connected with an internationalist perspective?

**AP:** I would define the demand for a left government as a class demand, the working class needs a government of its own and the only one available today is a government of the Left under SYRIZA. But this government will have contradictory elements. Once in government, SYRIZA will try to come to a compromise with the bourgeoisie. SYRIZA's government will be from the first moment implicated with this contradiction. It will be put under enormous pressure to make compromises and to accept the terms of the *troika* on things like debt.

What the SYRIZA leadership doesn't seem to understand is that in order to be able to provide even the minimal needs of the working class, it has to confront the *troika*. It has to refuse to pay the debt, it has to nationalize the banking system and bring the commanding heights of the economy under worker's control and management, and lastly it has to follow a whole series of measures which will make possible for the public sector to take responsibility for major investments and allow the economy to grow.

The working class will not be satisfied by explanations like "we need to compromise," because for them it is a matter of life and death. The workers will demand their rights, will demand to take back at least part of what they have lost. This will raise the question of the workers' control and management and nationalization. This is the revolutionary potential. Our

task as Marxists, as revolutionaries, is to help the volcano explode. If this happens it will have international repercussions. If the Left in Greece is successful it will have a very positive effect in Europe and elsewhere.

**NM:** If we can rewind a little: Why did CWI groups stop working within labor parties? What were the benefits for Trotskyist organizations in doing so and why did these efforts not result in the politicization of the masses under the guidance of Trotskyist organizations?

**AP:** I think that the move of the CWI groups to abandon work within labor parties or social-democratic parties was entirely correct, as these parties were becoming increasingly bourgeoisified, that is, developing into parties of the capitalist ruling class and losing their working class characteristics and composition. This tendency developed in the course of the 1980s and was completed in the 1990s after the collapse of Stalinism.

As regards the benefits of the Trotskyist organizations—had the CWI stayed within labor and social-democratic parties through the 1990s, it would, in all likelihood, have been destroyed. Speaking generally, it would have been impossible for the forces of Trotskyism to politicize the masses under their guidance. Because, on the one hand, mass consciousness suffered a setback after the collapse of Stalinism and the rise of neoliberalism. On the other hand, because the Trotskyist forces were weak, they did not have the critical mass which was necessary for the improbable task of politicizing the masses in the 1990s and 2000s. Everything was thrown back and we had to start from a much lower level.

**NM:** Would you say that we are experiencing a revival of Marxist and Trotskyist ideas nowadays? Has Trotskyism as a current born in the second half of the last century moved forward and progressed? And is there a way that this can be measured?

**AP:** I don't think that, in terms of the numbers, Trotskyist organizations are any better off today than in the past. Back in the 1980s the number of Trotskyist organizations was growing. But I think we have progressed in two different aspects that are crucial. First, we are experiencing a revival of Trotskyism, I am convinced of this and I think it is quite clear. Second, a main difference today compared to the past is the explosion of social democracy, rather than the type of reformism and Stalinism that held sway in the 1970s.

I think that we are in a period in which there is a huge opportunity for the forces of Marxism, particularly those of Trotskyism, which is the present day expression of Marxism and Bolshevism. Stalinism is finished as a historical current. Even though we still have the Stalinist KKE and other Stalinist organizations, these groups have no future. I would say that Stalinism is living out its death agony in Greece, but its death will not take place tomorrow. Reformism has also been seriously weakened. Healthier forces of revolutionary Marxism can now come into the spotlight.

**NM:** What is the importance of Trotskyism in a country like Greece?

**AP:** The KKE speaks of revolution in words, but not in actions. It is, to start with, a nationalist party. A party like the KKE is completely out of context in this epoch in which internationalism is more important than ever. Stalinism is conservative. Stalinism is undemocratic. Stalinism doesn't have a point of reference today like it did during the existence of the USSR. However, in countries like Greece, it is still an obstacle. SYRIZA doesn't have the political program to put the gravestone on Stalinism.

Anarchism is another factor in Greece. The main problem with anarchism is that it invests everything in the spontaneity of the masses. But the masses have given many examples of magnificent, spontaneous movements, none of which came to anything.

This leads us to Trotskyism: It is the only force that ideologically and politically offers a solution. It is internationalist. It is based on a transitional program. It is based on the tactic of a United Front. Finally it is based on party democracy and democracy in the working class in general. These four factors are absolutely crucial for any force that wants to provide a solution to the catastrophic crisis we are facing.

**NM:** Is there a need for a Fifth International?

**AP:** I don't think that there is a Fourth International so that we can fight for the Fifth. But there is a need for an International.

**NM:** Do you think the Trotskyist tradition has overcome Stalinism in Greece and internationally?

**AP:** We cannot say that the ideas of Trotskyism are now dominant in Greece or globally. But we can say that the Stalinist idea of "socialism in one country" has been severely weakened. Yet, in Greece, like in Portugal, Spain, France, and South Africa, Stalinism remains strong, much stronger than any Trotskyist organization.

**NM:** How do you distinguish the strategy of a United Front from the Popular Front?

**AP:** This distinction is necessary and we make it in Greece. There are many groups on the Left that refer to the Popular Front. What they mean by "Popular Front" is for everyone to come together. But the Popular Front, in the classic sense, as it was established in the 1930s, was an alliance of workers' organizations and bourgeois organizations in the name of fighting against fascism—it was a Stalinist creation. We have to insist that what is required today is a United Front. What is required today is an alliance and unity among the forces that represent the working class.

For example, there are nearly 70-80 antifascist committees and initiatives in cities across Greece right now. We don't think that ruling parties should enter these antifascist committees. These committees should be made up of the forces that fight fascism and have a reference to the working class. If the bourgeois parties enter the antifascist committees in Greece today they will not be fighting, but instead, indirectly, assisting fascism. The difference between a classical form of the Popular

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