

A Dual Struggle for the Present and Future of Europe

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Back in 2013, in his provocative [article](#) ‘The Latin Empire should strike back’, Giorgio Agamben revived the idea of a union of southern European countries, a proposal first launched by another philosopher, Alexandre Kojève. During the ongoing economic crisis, we have read and heard many times about the [north-south divide](#) within the European Union or about a possible collaboration of the southern countries of EU.

Nothing really happened until 9 September, when Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras welcomed the leaders of the Republic of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain for the first Mediterranean EU Countries' Summit in Athens. The same day, PM Tsipras, in an [interview](#) with *EurActiv*, explained the purpose of this summit: ‘It is now common knowledge that Europe is at a critical crossroads. Economic stagnation, social cohesion problems, the rise of Euroscepticism and isolationism, the strengthening of far-right populist phenomena, are issues that we cannot bypass in a serious debate on the future development of European integration. In such a debate, Europe’s Mediterranean countries can and must raise their voice. (...) Currently, the crucial point for the EU is to have a new vision, with clear political, social and pro-growth dimension.’

As the central figures of this summit were Tsipras, Renzi and Hollande, the summit was understood – despite the participation of right-wing politicians – as another meeting of social democratic and left-wing leaders. German Finance Minister Schäuble made this very clear with his [sneering comment](#): ‘When socialist party leaders meet, nothing terribly intelligent comes out of it most of the time.’

Two weeks earlier, on 25 August, Tsipras participated as an observer in a meeting of leaders of the Party of European Socialists called by the French President Hollande in Paris. In that meeting Tsipras stressed again the need for changes in the policies of European Union and mainly the need to end austerity. Finally, the Greek Prime Minister proposed the creation of a forum for dialogue among the Social Democrats, the European Left and the Greens. Many people from different perspectives heard that proposal with suspicion. But if we want to talk in pragmatic terms, this is a positive and very much needed proposal within the current political context in European Union.

The European Union of harsh austerity, of neoliberalism, of fences, of racism must be challenged. On one hand there is the German-inspired doctrine of austerity, a Europe of strict economic rules and severe punishment for those who deviate from them. On the other hand there is the ultra-conservative Europe of the far right. The most recent example is the [joint statements](#) of Orbán and Kaczyński. They have pledged to wage a ‘cultural counter-revolution’ together to reform the European Union. ‘Brexit is a fantastic opportunity for us. We are at a historic cultural moment. There is a possibility of a cultural counter-revolution right now,’ Viktor Orbán said emphatically.

A forum that could facilitate the dialogue among the Party of European Socialists, the European Left and the Greens would make sense, considering the predicament that we are facing. I believe that it is worth to put aside the big objections that we may hold, mainly against the role of the Social Democratic parties in recent years (I have discussed this topic in a [previous post](#)), and try to find a minimum common ground that will allow us to save what deserves to be saved from the European idea. The formation of an informal European ‘Pluralistic Left’ that will try to push for the end of austerity, for solidarity among Member States, that will defend human and democratic rights, that will oppose the treatment of

refugees almost as ‘wild animals’ as the Foreign Minister of Luxemburg [put it](#) in the case of Hungary, that will struggle to protect ethnic, sexual – and any other kind of – minorities across the Member States is a really vital task. It is not and it should not be the ultimate aim, the final horizon of our struggle.

The struggle for a radically alternative and truly progressive Europe is something greater than that. But in order to construct another Europe, we have to survive the attacks from the dogmatic neoliberals and from the far right nostalgics of the dark era of our continent. We have in front of us a defensive struggle to save the present and a creative, positive struggle to build our future. In both struggles the existing political parties and the grassroots social movements will have an important role to play. The historical cycle we are living in is far from being completed.