

The European Peoples' Volcano and the Representative "Democracy" of the Elites*

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The new blow to the European section of the transnational elite effected by the Irish people with its rejection of the European Treaty will not, of course, "reason" the elite, so that it will take the popular will into consideration in the future. This eruption will simply induce the elites to a more systematic effort to "convince" the European peoples on the "benefits" of the European Treaty and, in turn, of the European Union (EU) itself. This is, for instance, what the Greek centre left party (PASOK) attempted to do, which, with one hand, voted for the European Treaty and, with the other, asked for a referendum, in a pseudo-mixture of direct and representative "democracy" which clearly did not aim at the people's validation of the Treaty (PASOK, together with the governing centre-right party [New Democracy], has already validated it in Parliament!) but simply aimed to convince its "subjects" on its benefits. More consistent with its oligarchic values, the previous leadership of the party (supported by many "modernizers", intellectuals and so on) demanded that the important decisions concerning the EU, like the Eurotreaty, to be left exclusively to the elites, ignoring the people they supposedly represent.

At the same time, the European section of the transnational elite itself is not preoccupied with similar communication tricks and, currently, deliberates on the new legal devices that will be necessary to validate the essence of the Treaty –exactly as it did, in blatant contempt of peoples' will, in the aftermath of the rejection of the European Constitution, three years ago. At that time, the elites did not have any qualms to start the procedure of replacing the European Constitution with today's European Treaty—a procedure which as Giscard d'Estaing, a professional politician who chaired the body which drafted the European Constitution confessed, was deliberately drafted to try to avoid the people of Europe having their say on it. As he stated in an article in the Independent^[1]

"The proposed institutional reforms, the only ones which mattered to the drafting convention, are all to be found in the Treaty of Lisbon. They have merely been ordered differently and split up between previous treaties...In the Treaty of Lisbon, the tools are largely the same. Only the order in which they are arranged in the tool-box has been changed. Admittedly, the box itself is an old model, which you have to rummage through in order to find what you are looking for."

It is therefore clear that the aim of the European section of the transnational elite, in both the Constitution and the Treaty (or whatever might replace it), is to formally institutionalize its power, limiting the ability of subordinate elites, like the Greek one, to veto its decisions, or to substantially differentiate their foreign policies from those of the

transnational elite (e.g. on recognising the illegally declared independence of Kosovo^[2]) and at the same time giving constitutional power to the regulations necessitated by neoliberal globalization^[3], which, in fact, have already been incorporated into the European Union Law and, therefore, override the domestic law of the member-states.

This clear disregard of the will of the European peoples by the European section of the transnational elite is not, of course, new. It became evident to everyone in the past few years when part of the transnational elite (USA, UK), ignoring the millions of European citizens who protested in the streets of the European capitals opposing the Iraq invasion, just went ahead with the invasion and the following brutal occupation of Iraq which still continues, while another part (the rest of the EU) later indirectly legitimised the invasion, as well as the puppet regimes which emerged out of the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan – i.e. the regimes which still survive just because of the continuing presence and full support of the occupying powers. Finally, exactly the same contempt is demonstrated today by the European part of the transnational elite toward the anxieties of the Europeans concerning the food crisis and in general the excessive increases in the price of oil and other commodities resulting from the open and liberated markets which are institutionalised in Europe by the EU Treaties – the codification of which was attempted through the European Constitution. Clearly, it is exactly this institutional framework that allows the capitalist speculators to get richer at the expense of the poorer social groups, which of course cannot be "saved" by the pseudo-measures discussed by the EU elites at the moment with the obvious aim to avoid an eruption of the European volcano.

If, however, pure representative "democracy" and professional politicians have become almost everywhere discredited – as is obvious by the polls, the effective dismantling of mass parties, and the growing absenteeism in elections – this does not mean that the solution to this "democratic deficit" – as the elites euphemistically call the parody of democracy expressed by representative "democracy" – will be given by a mixture of representative and direct democracy, i.e. the solution to the political crisis proposed today by the reformist Left in order to guarantee a role for their own professional politicians. Referendums, even when they are not a joke, as the one proposed by PASOK in Greece concerning the European Treaty, by their own nature, have nothing to do with true democracy – that, from classical times meant direct democracy that is, taking decisions in face-to-face citizens' assemblies^[4] – and cannot express the citizens' true will. A referendum, without a thorough and systematic discussion among the citizens themselves (and not between the "experts", i.e. the professional politicians, in TV news panels), will either express the views of the mass media and the elites controlling them or, even when it does indeed express the peoples' will against the decisions of the elites, can easily be ignored by them in ways similar to the ones we mentioned above. However, even where there have been attempts in practice of introducing some kind of mixture between direct and indirect democracy (Brazil, Venezuela, and so on), the result was again to leave the most important decisions to the professional politicians, while the people's assemblies were left only with decisions to implement the prior decisions of the elites or with decisions on minor issues.

In conclusion, the fundamental question that arises in the 21st century, given the continuous deterioration of the crisis that ranges from the political and economic levels to the social and ecological ones is whether it is possible, in the existing framework of capitalist neoliberal globalization and representative "democracy", to overcome this multidimensional crisis.

* – The above text is based on an article first published in the fortnightly column of Takis Fotopoulos in the Athens daily *Eleftherotypia* of 21/6/2008.

[1] Ben Russell, "EU treaty is a constitution, says Giscard d'Estaing", *The Independent* (30/10/2007)

[2] see T. Fotopoulos "[The New World Order in Action: From Kosovo to Tibet](#)" (in this issue).

[3] see T. Fotopoulos, "[The European Constitution and the Left](#)", *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (July 2005).

[4] see the new revised edition of *Inclusive Democracy* (in Greek) T. Fotopoulos, *Inclusive Democracy: 10 Years Afterwards* (Eleftheros Typos, May 2008).