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For a constituent initiative in Europe

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The system of constitutional democracy in the most recent postwar era in Europe was organized around a model of rotating the exercise of government between left and right in all countries (and, after 1978, also in Spain, complemented by the nationalist and/or independentist forces). This took place within the framework of a capitalist system in evolution that was subject to reforms – but not subject to discussion of fundamental issues. The terms were those of Yalta. This model is in crisis. In fact, third forces have already emerged in the electoral fields of many European countries that disrupt this dual scheme. In this regard we must ask ourselves if the construction of the new constitutional structure of the European Union did not begin precisely from the moment of foreseeing the crisis of the postwar constitutional model – and, at any rate, from the moment of perceiving incontinence already visible in the classical democratic model. This structure presented itself as a guarantee that a capitalist model of development could be maintained as its nation-state forms decayed. On the other hand, the left as much as the right have slipped towards the "center," creating artificial forms of representation and governance geared towards an equilibrium that was supposed to guarantee stability

into the future, eliminating all dialectic of reform or transformation.

Against this backdrop, the situation today is changing rapidly. The Greek crisis is beginning to reveal that this homogeneity of the power of command (composed of "right" and "left") represents a conservative and frequently outright reactionary function. On the one hand, the right thinks of Europe as its own spoils. The way in which those on the right, until now a majority in Europe, have acted and continue to act shows that they want a Europe that is their exclusive product – a true objectification. On the other hand, if we look to the socialist governments, trapped in a centrist block that allows them to manage partial interests, it can be observed that they have renounced all hope of renewal. Examples of this include the embarrassing harakiri of Zapatero in May 2010 or the self-destruction of the Greek PASOK.

The European Union, as it has been formed and as it appears today, governed by a political "center" – which is capable of conducting extremist and devastating actions in defense of capitalist equilibriums – is subject to blackmail and may be destined to shatter. How much more the European multitudes understood that, in a globalized world, only a continental organization can allow for the satisfaction of the vital needs of the populations; the European political classes are proven to be less disposed to enter a political Union – unless it be built to directly and exclusively satisfy their interests.

We need to part with this decline and put democracy back into play in the construction of the European project. This is necessary in order for Greece to survive, for the democratic forces in Spain to establish themselves and continue winning, and for all Europeans to recognize themselves in Europe and exit a crisis and an austerity

that no longer only make survival difficult, but also inhibit being free. They can play it in both terrains, that of the existing Europe and that of the old, aggressive nationalism. We, in turn, cannot.

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It is a particularly painful fact that to speak in favor of Europe today, to work towards the foundation of a constituent power that imposes its social character and its democratic characterization with a federalist perspective, the polemic must be developed against a considerable part of the lefts in Europe. It is clear that they have sold their inheritance. Already in 2005, at the moment of referendum on the European Constitution, the blindness of the European lefts became evident. The fact is that the European socialists do not see a possibility for doing politics and managing power that does not take place within the nation-State. This nationalist sectarian blindness has been reborn (after a long eclipse) and has reached its summit in the course of the European crisis. Instead of allying themselves with the movements of struggle to change the reality of the European Union, the European lefts have frequently declared themselves not only in favor of the politics of austerity, but also against Europe (as, for example, is taking place now in France), motivated by a corporate egoism that is depriving the word "left" of the little splendor that remained to it. So much so that this egoism is easily confounded with the hatred of the fascist forces against the Union. It is said by some left officials that Europe cannot function because, since the beginning, instead of a political government it opted, in its process of birth, to entrust itself to juridical bureaucracies: and it is true. It is also said that in a second phase the attempt was made to politically synchronize economies that had different and sometimes contradictory rhythms without introducing, at any point, effective motives for programmatic unity at the fiscal and cultural levels: and it is true.

Later, under the flames of the crisis, they could not stop misfiring compensatory mechanisms, which brought the Union and the Euro – precisely in the absence of any political counter-force – to the edge of dissolution, at the expense of the vast majority of the populations of the South of Europe: and it is true.

But why do the parties of the left want to give us lessons when it has been precisely their exclusively state-oriented vision, the corporatism of the unions, and the betrayal of all internationalist hope that brought us into this situation? Everybody knows that the political unity of Europe constitutes the fundamental component of its economic and civil success in the global market. It is about a politics whose promotion would correspond to the left – while the left has confused and corrupted itself in alliance with the right not only in the instances of national government, but above all at the European level.

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Now there is no time to lose. To restart integration today means to start a *constituent campaign*, it means to eliminate the passive consensus that until now has enabled the triumph of the current European structures and the continuity of the disaster caused by its politics. It means to develop a public opinion that begins to outline a new constitutional perspective. After the victory of Syriza, and harboring hopes in that of Podemos, after euroradical forces have started to be born in many parts of Europe, it is not difficult to understand that to constitute Europe means to get rid of the conservative parameters that have determined its structures and politics until now. It is strange to highlight it now, but what is certain is that since the victory of Syriza the internal and external dimensions of the Union have begun to overlap and go hand in hand, like an incentive for a regime of greater equality and liberty,

like an effort to make the "common" a recognizable value beyond the dichotomy between the private and the public in each country of Europe *and* at the same time a pressure – crossing all the European countries – in favor of *democratically sanctioned federal integration.* It is a process in an initial phase, but it is potentially majoritarian. At any rate, we must recognize that there is a new constituent spirit in the air; will it not be precisely the perception of this that – in return – produces so much hysteria and vulgarity in the media of the bosses, in the declarations of the parties and of the European bureaucracies? There is a new understanding of the fact that liberation within each of the countries has to go together with the potential of federation at the level of all of Europe – is this not what frightens the narrow-minded and ignorant national oligarchies?

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A nice article recently published in the Italian daily *Il Manifesto* recalled the Tennis Court Oath stipulated by the revolutionaries of the Third Estate when it became evident that the remainder of the *Ancien régime* could not endorse a constitutional reform based in liberty, equality and solidarity. Today, the democratic forces in Europe need to make a similar pass, to take an oath that will allow new forms of federal union and new structures of economic unity to be identified at the European level on a basis that would gather the new democratic radicality that has been expressed since 2011 onwards.

There are components of foreign, legal and economic policy that lay the foundation for this constituent necessity – to which must correspond a political decision that takes its flesh form in the movements. The foreign policy aspects arise from a reflection on Europe's position in the global environment. Today, Europe is part

of a block of forces gathered in the North Atlantic Treaty, which orients, in an irresponsible manner, the foreign policy of the countries of the Union. The interests of the European populations are completely subordinated to Atlantic power. In this arena, we witness daily the unjust paradoxes and unjustifiable entanglements, among which we recently observed the European financing of the Ukrainian war at the same time that the refinancing of the Greek debt was blocked. But the confusion of the passivity of the people and the opacity of the decisions, of the compromises and the vileness in foreign policy of each of the countries and of the Union is indescribable: Enough is enough! The irresponsibility of this strategic and military relation represents, in this age of global instability, an extremely dangerous condition that any constituent initiative will have to consider a primary concern. (And this is also an issue of stopping the violence and the murder of people in the external borders of the Union.)

Europe, liberating itself of the Atlantic conditioning, should be capable of developing autonomous policies as much to promote exchange as to make available to the world the collective intelligence – the *general intellect* of which Marx spoke – created until now; as much to support the peoples who continue to be oppressed as to *create a peace* and a development that are lasting. In effect, we cannot forget that what is at stake today is peace.

With regard to juridical conditions, what is certain is that the move towards a federal structure of government of the multitudes of Europe cannot cease to be the central aim in this constituent phase. We are supporters of a constituent power that creates a federation in Europe. We are supporters of laying the foundations and setting the aim of a federal order that gathers, mobilizes and consolidates the civil, economic and moral interests of the citizens of each of the States, in a community of Europeans that also

recognizes the European citizenship of citizens of second and third category, that is, the migrants who are EU and non-EU citizens. We know that to "federalize" is difficult because, in the current phase, it requires the destruction of the oligarchies of the European government and therefore those of the parties of each of the countries of the Union. But the federation can construct itself despite these obstacles if we remember that we are dealing not only with a matter of a unity of States, of different political-economic configurations, but that it is the process within which a new history of Europe (beyond the wars of the past) and the virtues of those who today can be capable (of a wealth of cognitive labor and of care labor, productive of economic and civil innovation) are revealed.

But above all we must insist on the fact that, based on the degree the political and social struggles, the new class struggles, the social organization of work and the capitalist extraction of wealth have attained, European unity and federalism cannot create an untouchable juridical machine that reproduces the current class differences. It cannot be the game in which everything changes in order for nobody to change, as was the case in the European transitions from Fascism to democracy in the postwar eras as well as in the 80s in the Spanish *transición*. We want a constitution that demands, from above, a governance of liberties; from below, from the multitudes, an exercise of egalitarian management in production and in the redistribution of wealth. In recent years we have watched the formation of new democratic constitutions in Latin America that combine the pluralism of the subjects with very effective dispositives of economic reform, and which created new social solidarities animated by an irresistible sense of equality. It is not a matter of imitating these experiences or discussing their success. It is a matter of creating and promoting a democratic

dynamic that is capable of winning in the field of a federal constitution based in the common. It is a matter of spreading and putting into practice a capacity of constructing social political enterprises that combine liberty and wealth. It is a matter of definitively eliminating any sense of threatening identity, which (always) produces nothing but nationalisms or suicide democracies in their oligarchic kind of reproduction. It is a matter of constructing a just and united Europe. Unfortunately, there is no alternative. The democratic eruptions of the multitudes in Greece, in Spain and later the success of Syriza and the hope of Podemos are, from this perspective, no more than a beginning, an occasion to seize with courage and intelligence.