

No to Ultimatums, No to the Memoranda of Servitude: Speech By the President of the Greek Parliament

Speech at the Greek Parliament, on the question of the government's proposal to the creditor institutions, 11.7.2015

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The speech delivered early in the morning of July 11 by Zoe Konstantopoulou, president of the Greek parliament, on the question of the government's proposal to the creditor institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At times like these we must act and speak with binding sincerity and political boldness. We must assume the responsibility that falls to each and every one of us.

We must defend, according to the dictates of our consciences, those things that are sacred, timeless, and non-negotiable, the laws and rights of the people and of society. We must guard the legacy of those who gave their lives and their freedom so that we may live as free people today. We must preserve the inheritance of the young and of future generations, of human civilization. [We must preserve], furthermore, the inalienable values that define and animate our personal and our collective existences.

How each person chooses and decides to act may differ, and no one has the right to trivialize decisions that arise from an existential process and trial, to berate them, or to exploit them for for political consumption.

Each and every one of us are are judged and shall be judged by our positions and our decisions, by our Yes and by our No, by our actions and omissions, by our commitments and our responses, by our dedication and selflessness.

For five months the Government, with the Left as its mainstream and with anti-memorandum forces at its core, has been waging an unequal battle within a regime of suffocation and blackmail: Inside a Europe that has betrayed its founding principles, the welfare of its peoples and societies. Inside a Europe that uses the common currency, the euro, not as a means of achieving social welfare, but as a lever and tool for the coercion and humiliation of unruly peoples and leaders. Inside a Europe that is transforming into a nightmarish prison for its peoples, although it was built to be their common and hospitable home.

The Greek people entrusted this Government with the great cause of releasing them from the shackles of the Memorandum, from the vise of surveillance and supervision imposed on

society under the pretext of debt.

This debt furthermore is illegal, unfair, odious and unsustainable, as demonstrated in the preliminary findings of the Truth Commission on Public Debt, and as the creditors already knew in 2010. This debt was not incurred as a cyclical phenomenon. It was created by the previous governments through corruption in procurement, bribes, misleading terms, corporate stipulations, and astronomical interest rates, all to the benefit of foreign banks and companies.

The Troika, together with the previous Greek governments, converted this fraudulent debt from private to public, saving the French and German and also the Greek private banks, and in the process condemned the Greek people to conditions of humanitarian crisis and employed the commercial organs of media misinformation to terrorize and deceive the citizenry.

This debt was neither created nor increased by the people or by the current Government. For five years it has been used as a tool to enslave the people, by forces operating within Europe under the rules of economic totalitarianism, in the absence of moral stature or historic right.

To this day Germany has not yet paid its debts to the small Greece of the wartime resistance, which history has identified for its heroism. These debts exceed the value of the present Greek public debt. According to the committee of the General Accounting Office set up by the previous government, these past debts would today reach a level of 340 billion euros, with conservative calculations. The alleged current debt of Greece is estimated at 325 billion euros.

After the Second World War, Germany enjoyed the greatest remission of debt [in history], so as to allow it to get back on track. This was done with the generous partnership of Greece. Yet now Germany has fomented the perpetrators of corporate corruption, those (including Siemens) who dealt with the previous Greek governments and their parties, and has given them protection from the Greek system of justice.

And yet Germany is behaving as if history and the Greek people owe a debt to her, as if she expects to receive a historic payback for her own atrocities. Germany is promoting and enforcing a policy that constitutes a crime, not only against the Greek people, but a crime against humanity. This is a criminal concept, a widespread and systematic attack on a population with the aim and calculation to bring about its total or partial extermination. And, unfortunately, governments and institutions that are required to live up to their history and their responsibility have aligned themselves behind this attack.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The artificial and deliberate creation of conditions of humanitarian disaster so as to keep the people and the government in conditions of suffocation and under the threat of a chaotic bankruptcy constitutes a direct violation of all international human rights protection treaties, including the Charter of the United Nations, the European treaties, and even the statutes of the International Criminal Court. Blackmail is not legal. And those who create conditions that eliminate freedom of the will may not speak of "options." The lenders are blackmailing the government. They are acting fraudulently, since they have known since 2010 that this debt is unsustainable. They are acting consciously, since their statements anticipate the need for

humanitarian aid in Greece. Humanitarian assistance for what? For an unexpected and inadvertent natural disaster? Is it an unpredictable earthquake, flooding, a fire?

No.

Humanitarian aid [would be required] because of their conscious and calculated choice to deprive the people of the means of survival, closing the tap of liquidity in retaliation for the democratic choice of the government and the parliament to call a referendum and to turn to the people to decide their own future. The Greek people honored the Government that entrusted them, and the parliament that allowed them the right to take their lives and fates in their own hands. With bravery and pride they announced

NO to blackmail

NO to ultimatums

NO to the Memoranda of servitude

NO to the repayment of a debt they did not create and that is not attributable to them

NO to new measures of impoverishment and exhaustion

The lenders have stubbornly insisted on transforming this NO into a YES, and they have found allies who gleefully collaborate with them in the same Greek parties who are responsible for the Memoranda, in those who benefited from them, in those who created this debt and loaded it on the backs of the people.

This NO of the people transcends all of us and compels us to defend their right to fight for their lives. To wrestle. Not to live a half life or a life on our knees. To be proud of what we bequeath to the next generations and to humanity.

Today the Government is being blackmailed to consent to conditions that do not represent it, that do not come from it, that it is struggling to reverse and prevent. The prime minister spoke with honesty, bravery, boldness and selflessness. He is the youngest of all Greek prime ministers and he has fought as much as any of his predecessors for the democratic and social rights of the people and of the younger generations. He represented and represents our generation, and he gives us hope. I honor him and will always honor him for this stand and this choice.

And at the same time, I consider it my binding responsibility, as president of the parliament, not to close my eyes or to pretend that I do not understand blackmail. I cannot make it easy. I could never vote for and legalize the content of this agreement.

I think the same is true and would apply to the Prime Minister, who is today blackmailed with a weapon threatening the survival of his people. I believe the same applies to the Government and to the parliamentary groups who support it.

I shall undertake my binding responsibility to history by stating “present,” as a “presence” in today’s debate and vote. I believe that in this way I make myself more useful to the people, to the Government and to the prime minister, to future generations and to the European societies, by recording the actual conditions under which the Greek parliament has been asked to make decisions. And by rejecting blackmail, by invoking Article 1-1-4 of

Article 120 of the Constitution.

The Greek people are the second to suffer this form of warfare in the Eurozone, preceded by Cyprus in March 2013. This attempt to impose measures rejected by the people in a referendum, using the blackmail of closed banks and the threat of bankruptcy, constitutes a violent overthrow of the Greek constitution and deprives the parliament of the authority granted to it by the constitution.

Everyone has the right and obligation to resist. No resistance in history was easy. But we undertook the popular vote, and we trust the people on the difficult matters. It is to the difficult matters that we must respond. And we must not fear.

Translated by Nicholas Evangelos Levis

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