Yanis Varoufakis on why the idea that Southern Europe is more corrupt than Northern Europe is a myth

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Yanis Varoufakis: Ever since I remember, the Greeks and the Italians and the Mediterraneans were presented by the Northerners as corrupt. And we in the South also accepted that because there's no doubt that there is endemic corruption in the south of the European Union. But it is low level, petty bourgeois corruption. It's cheap corruption. Whereas the North practices industrial scale, systematic, beautifully designed, high tech corruption. I mean, how many examples do you want me to give you? Siemens, 20 years ago, the FBI called Siemens having bribed hundreds, if not thousands of politicians across Europe to adopt the Siemens electricity and telecommunication equipment. It was only when the Americans caught them, that they revealed, the FBI revealed all the data, including Greek politicians and Italian politicians and so on. You want me to mention Novartis? Exactly the same thing with Novartis. Do you want me to mention Volkswagen? Audi? Mercedes-Benz with their Dieselgate? I mean, think about it. This is corruption taken to a level of rocket science. They developed systems within their engines that detected when the engine exhaust was being monitored by some high tech equipment of national pollution management agencies used on those engines, so the engine would know when it was being monitored and suddenly it changed the fuel mixture to be more environmentally friendly. Do you realise that that takes hundreds of skilled engineers designing a system that goes into diesel engines in order to cheat. I mean, you know, we, the Mediterraneans, don't have this technology. We're not that advanced to be able to do it. Now, what about Deutsche Bank? Deutsche Bank, in 2008, 2009, it was revealed that they had bet in the derivative markets of the United States as some of dollars approximately 30 times the national income of Germany. They had become so bankrupt that they threatened to swallow the whole of the German Federal Republic. And what happend? Nothing. Merkel paid them, paid up. Astronomical corruption. This is corruption that, I mean, Eva Kaili should be given a medal for ethics compared to Deutsche Bank. A medal for ethics! What €600,000 when you've got billions and billions and billions? Now, what they did here in Greece, the Greek banks have gotten bankrupt. And what they did here was to come and make the German workers lend to the Greek state €50 billion with which the Greek state was forced, to buy shares in those bankrupt Greek banks that didn't

have a vote. So the Greek people had to vote for the German workers 50 billion to buy shares that didn't give the Greek people who bought those shares a say in how to run those banks. And then the same banks were forced... given the opportunity to sell the loans of the little people that the little people could not repay because of all this disaster, you know, austerity, bankruptcy and so on, so little people could not pay their mortgages. So then those same banks, together with oligarchs from around the world in Delaware and Cayman Islands, created funds that purchased those loans from those banks for 3% of their nominal price, evicting those people from their homes, selling their homes, creating new derivatives with the proceeds of those homes and selling them to the same banks. Now, again, it takes extremely sophisticated financial engineers and lawyers who get paid huge quantities of money to indulge in what I just described, which is nothing short of the mother of all corruption. With taxpayer's money. Think of the Greek airports again. 14 airports, like Santorini and Mykonos, airports that cannot not have huge profits because everybody who has gone to Mykonos knows what I mean. Right?! They took these airports, they gave them to Fraport, a German company, for zero money on the basis of a loan that the Greek people were forced to Fraport. And during the pandemic, we gave them a €180 million from money we borrowed from the European Central Bank to cover, not the costs of those airports, but for the profits they would have made if there was no COVID 19. And this... Did the European Parliament agree that with that? No... Were they asked? No... Where they told? No.. But even if they were told, they would have already been paid off to turn a blind eye. Somebody in the chat just said: "You say that there's no democracy, that you can't get rid of them." The European Union Council, well, it's made of elected heads of state and heads of government. And even Ursula Von der Leyen and the rest of the vegetables vegetating in the Commission, they've been appointed by elected governments. That's all correct. It's all correct and it's also irrelevant. Because let me tell you this: I've been in the Eurogroup, I've been in the ECOFIN, I've been in the European Council. I'll tell you how it works. You go in there, 28, 29 people representing different countries, you are democratically elected, the decision has already been made before you going there, of what you going to decide. If you're really tough, like I tried to be, that, you veto it. But then, of course, after six months, you're no longer a minister. So you keep your mouth shut because you don't want to lose that position. And in that council, no one agrees with the decision that's been made. No one, not a single person. Believe me, not a single person ever. If you speak to them individually, they say: "Yeah, it was crap what we decided." And then they come out and they give a statement to the press, that they've agreed on that. They don't even know what they agreed on, more or less. And they go home. The Italian goes to Rome, the Greek goes to Athens, the German goes to Berlin, and then they blame it all on the European Union Council, to which they were a member. They say: "What could we do? I couldn't go against the grain, against Europe. I couldn't go against Europe. I had to agree." Nobody agrees with that, with what they agreed to. That's how the European Union works. That's why I called it a cartel. When I was a member of the Greek government, I could have been overthrown the next day by the Greek parliament. I could've been overthrown by the Greek people in the next general election. The Greek people could withdraw their support to us. The Germans can dismiss the German. But the European Union

Council that makes all these decisions can only be dismissed by the Europeans. You realise that. So nobody takes the responsibility for what it does. Nobody agrees with what it does and they all blame it on Europe. So when something good happens as a result of the European Union Council, everybody is part of the glory. When something goes wrong, nobody takes responsibility. That's not a democracy. That is a bloody disaster whose only beneficiaries are the oligarchs and the Qataris and the Kailis and all those bloody parasites. That's what it is. So what is DiEM25 proposing? From day one, February 2016, when we created DiEM25, what we proposed was: Transparency everywhere. Let's livestream the bloody meetings. Of the council. Every minister's gathering. I would say every time any MEP... I want perfect surveillance. Exactly the opposite of what we are demanding from citizens. We want citizens to be protected from surveillance. We want full surveillance on officials. You get elected, you get surveyed. Every meeting you have is livestreams. I know it sounds extreme, I am exaggerating to make a point. All of the important meetings, all the fora, like our parliaments being televised. Why isn't the European Union Council televised? Why isn't ECOFIN? So this is the first thing we said. And then, of course, beyond that, all power to Europeans. Constitutional Assembly. Have a parliament that actually works as a parliament. The things that are never going to happen. Because folks, let's be honest with one another. 2015, 2016 was a time to imagine a clash with the establishment by progressives. That's why we created DiEM25. In the end, the corrupt radical centre of the Troika, of Brussels, of Frankfurt, Berlin of Athens and so on, they won. And the only opposition, real opposition, are the fascists. And the fact that we still exist, as a small movement, saying the things we are saying to one another, is a major victory. But we are defeated. Because Europe is defeated. Personally, I don't think we can reform Europe. That's gone. It's pie in the sky now. All we can do is organise, orchestrate, general resistance against this beast, in Brussels, in Frankfurt, in Berlin, and all our capitals. Carpe diem.

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