



Yanis Varoufakis: How the EU Is Fueling War, Austerity & Authoritarianism

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Yanis Varoufakis (YV): Friends, fellow travellers, comrades, we once had a dream of what Europe could have been. A Europe of shared prosperity, of dignity, of freedom, a Europe of peace with hope. Alas, that dream is now dead. It's gone, it's lost, it's kaputt, it's finished. Why? What the hell happened to Europe? Well, we know what happened to Europe. We know why politicians, from all over, are descending upon this splendid city as we speak; like manic drones determined to blow up, to bomb, to smithereens what is left of the dream of Europe. We know what happened in Europe. On the 9th of February 2016 we were at the Volksbühne theatre in Berlin and that was the day, the night when DiEM25 was born and in that meeting we said in no uncertain terms, Europe will either democratise or it will disintegrate. In the last nine years Europe refused to democratise and therefore today it is disintegrating, it is degenerating into a totalitarian war union. You can see that, you can smell it. This is what happens when you have austerity for the many and money printing as if there is no tomorrow for the very few. Mixed with this austerity, you have mind-numbing surges of inequality. Every time capitalism stagnates, and inequality surges, while the official left joins the centre in a futile attempt to bail out the bankrupt liberal establishment, do you know what is around the corner every time that happens? Fascism and war. Just like in the 1930s. Two varieties of totalitarianism began to tussle for power. The radicalised neo-fascist right promises to make us great again, not through ending austerity or exploitation, but through a moral reckoning, a kind of cultural cleansing that targets the impure foreign bodies in the pure body of the nation, or at least the Christian, white, patriarchal Europe. Foreigners, trans people, lesbians, Muslims, and Jews, particularly those who don't support genocide, are proclaimed the enemy within. On the other side you have the radicalised totalitarian centrists who succeeded in retaining their relevance as the only bulwark against the fascists. How do they do that? With policies that deepen the crisis that fuels fascism and thus their claim, their own claim, to be the only bulwark against fascism. This is the definition of a perfect vicious cycle that fuels totalitarianism. Like tweedledum and tweedledee, the radicalised totalitarian centrists and the radicalised neo-fascists, they are sucking the air out of democracy, making

totalitarianism great again. Every variety of it.

Lest we forget, we did not have to wait for fascists to win government, before our Greek referendum of July 2015 was banned because they didn't like the outcome. We didn't have to wait for the fascists to win government before they fired Melanie Schweizer from her job at the German civil service for failing to support genocide. We didn't have to wait for the fascists to win government before they banned me from entering Germany even via Zoom. We didn't have to wait for the fascists to win government before the Romanian presidential elections were cancelled simply because radicalised totalitarian centrists didn't like the outcome. The only substantive difference between the 1930s and our times today, do you know what it is? Tweedledum, that is the radicalised totalitarian centrists and tweedledee, the radicalised neo-fascist parties, they have traded places when it comes to war. Somehow confusingly, tweedledum, the radicalised totalitarian centrists who are weaponizing military Keynesianism are crying out for more war, for an endless war. And the tweedledee part of the equation, the radicalised neo-fascists, they are advocating for peace – well, a very steely, very ruthless, very chilling form of peace.

Yes, in 2015, 2016, we foretold all that at the Volksbühne Theatre, but that didn't stop us from failing to stop it; a cruel reminder that being right is not everything. Why did we fail? Why did we miss the popular way, which ten years ago was on our side of politics? And why therefore did we allow the fascists to exploit their revived thirst for radicalism? Yes, it is true, we were ruthlessly squeezed between tweedledum, the radicalised totalitarian centrists and tweedledee will be the radicalised neo-fascist right. But we have to confess that we made some unforced errors ourselves. We invested, and this is a personal criticism too, too much on green Keynesianism, forgetting the timeless lesson that even when the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, adopts Keynesianism as a last resort to save themselves, the ruling class will always stop it, withdraw from it the moment their bottom line improves, well before the many taste any of the fruits of Keynesianism, green or not so green. Our Green New Deal was, after all, never adopted, except in name, they even dropped "the new", they just made it the Green Deal, totally vacuous programme, which now of course is dead in the water.

So our Green New Deal contributed in the minds of people out there who are not particularly political. Every time they hear the word green, they immediately think, you know what it translated to?! It's like the Iraqis in Baghdad, when they hear the word democracy with an American accent, they hide under the table because they know they will be bombed. The people of Europe, the stragglers of Europe, when they hear the word green policy, they think, oh my god, they will tax me again. Higher cost of living for me that had to shoulder the banking crisis, the bailouts. We also proved unable to liberate people from exploitation. What we gave them as DiEM25 was the freedom to choose their pronouns on our website, which would have been fine if it wasn't so pathetically inadequate in the grander scheme of things. We ended up, instead of organising autoworkers, the precariat, nurses, we organised signifiers. Appearing to many people, to the vast majority, as an intellectual vanguard that is really enjoying the self-styled subversive thrills from an imagined revolution with all the comforts and trappings of a bourgeois soiree. And last but not least, we thought we would

mobilise and radicalise the existing left, centre-left, green parties, only to discover two or three years later that they didn't care. They were not interested. What must we do now? Let's begin by acknowledging that we are at the end of a 40-year long cycle of a vicious class war waged against working people. And we are at the beginning of another cycle, this time of military Keynesianism, of weaponized xenophobia, of totalitarianism within, and techno feudalism all around us.

So, it's time to be bold, time to be clear on seven crucial issues that must become seven crucial campaigns. On security and peace, or peace with security; and how to end the carnage on the killing fields of Ukraine, where lives are being devoured by a ruthless mechanical precision. Let us reject outright Donald Trump's predatory seizure of Ukraine's natural resources. Let us campaign to get the whole of Europe, not just one country or another, out of NATO, immediately. There is no point in NATO. It has been proven. Donald Trump has it proven. We should have proven it before Donald Trump. But we need to get out of NATO. Brussels needs to throw NATO into the sea. Let us plot a course to a non-aligned, but never neutral, Europe. A non-aligned, but never neutral Europe. Offering to relax sanctions as a carrot and return to Russia its 300 billion dollars of frozen assets. We should immediately commence negotiations with the Kremlin and with Beijing on a comprehensive strategic arrangement between Europe, Russia and China. An arrangement within which Ukraine becomes, in the next 100 years, what Austria was during the Cold War. What was Austria during the Cold War? It was sovereign, it was neutral, democratic, and as integrated with the rest of Europe as its citizens needed and desired. That's what the plan for Ukraine should be.

On green prosperity, we must fiercely oppose military Keynesianism. It is unsustainable. The only thing it can produce is poverty, depth and more crisis, not to mention war. We must fiercely oppose military Keynesianism and we must replace it with a massive green investment programme that combines development with degrowth. On dignity, let us campaign for a new monetary commons that sidelines private banks, offers a trust fund for everyone and guarantees a universal dividend, call it a universal basic income, to each. On the big thorny issue of migration; let us turn the accusation of us being soft on foreigners into a virtue. Let us shout it from the rooftops that Europe without mass migration will die. It will perish. It will not be viable. Let us proclaim that we want migrants not out of solidarity but out of self-interest on combating techno-feudalism. Let us sanction immediately the cloud-elitist tech lords, not just Musk, but Jeff Bezos, Peter Thiel, Google. Let's restrict immediately the access to the European markets of Amazon, of Uber, of Airbnb. Instead of the Luxembourg, Ireland, Holland, means by which they pay no tax, let us tax them to extinction, let's impose – can't we create our own apps in this continent of ours? Why do we need them? Let us impose interoperability. That would really cut them off at the knees. Let's end the ban on companies like the Dutch company, ASML, to export tech to China. And above all else, let us develop our own socialised cloud capital, the stirrings of a magnificent future techno-socialism.

On freedom, shall we dismantle totalitarianism now in each one of our countries? Shall we not benefit enormously from fighting for everyone's freedom to vote and for their vote to be

counted? For the freedom of expression of our enemies as well, not just the people we agree with. Unlike J.D. Vance, who rightly spoke out in Munich, if you remember, a few weeks ago, against Europe's descent into censoriousness. He did say that. He was right. except of course that he was a bloody hypocrite because he would never defend Julian Assange's right to journalism or our right to freedom of speech in favour of Palestine. Speaking of Palestine and free speech, it is clear now, is it not, that what started in Gaza cannot stay in Gaza. Such brutality could not be contained within Gaza. To keep it from our media, from our cultural institutions, from the streets and the squares where we demonstrate, the powers that be had to dissolve basic civil liberties in Germany, in Holland, in France, in the United States. That's why our final our seventh campaign must be stop genocide, get the whole of Europe to boycott, divest and sanction Israel, the last apartheid state in the same way that we sanctioned, divested and boycotted South Africa, South Africa under apartheid.

Friends, fellow travellers, comrades, we have much to do. The European dream is dead. Long live the dream that we are dreaming tonight together, Carpe Diem. Thank you.

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