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Greece Surrendered: But to Whom Exactly?

by Diana Johnstone

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Paris.

On July 12, Greece surrendered abjectly and totally. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, who had promised to combat the austerity measure that are driving the Greek people to ruin, poverty and suicide, betrayed all his promises, denied the will of the people expressed in the July 5 referendum, and led the Greek parliament to accept an agreement with the nation's creditors even worse than all those that had already caused the economy to shrink and which further abandoned the last scraps of national sovereignty.

Yes, Greece surrendered unconditionally, as has been thoroughly and eloquently expressed here on CounterPunch and elsewhere. But one crucial question appears not to have been adequately answered. To whom, exactly, did Greece surrender?

A common answer to that question is: Germany. The poor Greeks surrendered to the arrogant Germans. This theme has served to revive anti-German feelings left over from World War II. Frau Merkel is portrayed as the heartless villain. One thing is sure: the animosity between Greece and Germany aroused by this debt catastrophe is proof that the “European dream” of transforming the historic nations of Western Europe into one single brotherly federation, on the model of the United States of America, is a total flop. The sense of belonging to a single nation,

with all for one and one for all, simply does not exist between peoples whose languages, traditions and customs are as diverse as those between Finns and Greeks. Adopting a common currency, far from bringing them together, has driven them farther apart.

But was this disaster actually dictated by the wicked Germans?

In reality, very many Germans, from the right-wing Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaüble all the way to the former leader of the left party “Die Linke” Oskar Lafontaine would have preferred a very different solution: Greece’s exit from the Eurozone. Schaüble was thinking of German finances, while Lafontaine was thinking of what would be best for the people of Greece – and of Europe as a whole.

Between those two extremes, a German compromise could have averted the abject surrender of July 12, by organizing Greece’s return to its national currency, the drachma.

Indeed, by the time of the Greek referendum, a majority of European Union creditor governments would have preferred to see Greece leave the Eurozone.

The one government that crowed with victory over the Greek surrender was the French government of François Hollande. In last minute negotiations, France took the position that Greece absolutely must be kept in the Eurozone, in order to “save Europe”. French commentators are jubilant that Hollande “stood up to Merkel” and saved both the sacrosanct “Franco-German couple” and the European Union itself by insisting that Greece stick to the hard currency that is killing it.

So can we conclude that Greece surrendered to France?

Let’s not be ridiculous. The French debt rivals that of Greece, with the difference, of course, that France has a real economy. France owns the largest share of Greek debt after Germany. But nevertheless, France is also eventually threatened by the Eurozone rules that are imposing debt servitude on southern European member states. France is in no position to dictate economic policy to Germany.

And that observation brings us around to the factor that has been overlooked in the case of Greece: the relationship of forces within the “trans-Atlantic community” and its military branch, NATO.

The United States has been relatively discrete during this crisis, but Washington’s will is known. Greece must stay tightly within the European Union, for geopolitical reasons. Just look where Greece is, and what it is: an Orthodox Christian country with traditional good relations with Russia, located on the Mediterranean not so far from “Putin’s Russia”. Greece must not be allowed to drift away. Period.

Another question that has been totally overlooked: is it possible for a NATO member country to shift policy in a way contrary to U.S. interests? Is it free to move toward truly friendly relations

with Russia? Greece has seen a military putsch in the not so distant past. The command and control of NATO member countries is closely monitored by the United States military.

Since former President Nicolas Sarkozy reversed General de Gaulle's strategic move to ensure national independence and returned France to the NATO command, France has indeed aligned itself with Washington to an unprecedented extent. With his brief show of "standing up to Madame Merkel", François Hollande was in fact carrying out the policy of Victoria Nuland.

The European Union (including Germany) will continue to wrestle with its "Greek problem", while Greece will continue to be strangled by the European Union.

The European surrender to the United States occurred about seventy years ago. It was welcomed as a liberation, of course, but it has turned into lasting domination. It was simply reconfirmed by the July 12, 2015, Greek surrender. And that surrender has been enforced by an increasingly hegemonic ideology of anti-nationalism, particularly strong in the left, that considers "nationalism" to be the source of all evil, and the European Union the source of all good, since it destroys the sovereignty of nations. This ideology is so dominant on the left that very few leftists dare challenge it – and Syriza was leftist in exactly that way, believing in the virtue of "belonging to the European Union", whatever the pain and suffering it entails. Thus Syriza did not even prepare for leaving the Eurozone, much less for leaving the European Union.

As a result, only "right-wing" parties dare defend national sovereignty. Or rather, anyone who defends national sovereignty will be labeled "right-wing". It is too easily forgotten that without national sovereignty, there can be no democracy, no people's choice. As the Greek disaster obliges more and more Europeans to have serious doubts about EU policy, the mounting desire to reassess national sovereignty faces the obstacle of left-right stereotypes. Much of the European left is finding itself increasingly caught in the contradiction between its anti-nationalist "European dream" and the destruction of democracy by the EU's financial bureaucracy. The Greek drama is the opening act of a long and confused European conflict.