

## THE BERTRAND RUSSELL PEACE FOUNDATION

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**GERMANY SHOULD REPAY GREECE**

*This petition is open for signature online ([www.greece.org](http://www.greece.org)).*

In October 1940, Greece was dragged into the Second World War by the invasion of its territory by Mussolini. To save Mussolini from a humiliating defeat, Hitler invaded Greece in April 1941.

Greece was looted and devastated by the Germans as no other country under their occupation. The International Red Cross has estimated that between 1941 and 1943 at least 300,000 Greeks died from starvation – the direct result of the plundering of Greece by the Germans. Mussolini complained to his minister of foreign affairs Count Ciano ‘The Germans have taken from the Greeks even their shoelaces’.

Germany and Italy, in addition to charging Greece exorbitant sums as occupation expenses, obtained forcibly from Greece a loan (occupation loan) of \$3.5 billion. Hitler himself had recognized the legal character of this loan and had given orders to start the process of its repayment. After the end of the war, at the Paris Conference of 1946, Greece was awarded \$7.1 billion, out of \$14.0 billion requested, for war reparations.

Italy repaid to Greece its share of the occupation loan, Italy and Bulgaria paid war reparations to Greece, and Germany paid war reparations to Poland in 1956 and to former Yugoslavia in 1971. Greece demanded from Germany payment of the occupation loan in 1945, 1946, 1947, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1974, 1987, and in 1995. However, Germany is consistently refusing to pay its obligations to Greece arising from the occupation loan and war reparations. In 1964, German Chancellor Erhard pledged repayment of the

loan after the reunification of Germany, which occurred in 1990.

**Indicative of the current value of the German obligations to Greece are the following: using as interest rate the average interest rate of US Treasury Bonds since 1944, which is about 6%, it is estimated that the current value of the occupation loan is \$163.8 billion and that of the war reparations is \$332 billion.** The French economist and consultant to the French government, Jacques Delpla, stated on 2 July 2011, that Germany owes to Greece 575 billion euros from Second World War obligations (*Les Echos*, Saturday, 2 July 2011). The German economic historian, Dr. Albrecht Ritschl, warned Germany to take a more chaste approach in the euro crisis of 2008-2011, as it could face renewed and justified demands for WWII reparations (*Der Spiegel*, June 21, 2011, guardian.co.uk, June 21, 2011).

The Germans did not just take ‘even their shoelaces’ from the Greeks. During World War Two, Greece lost 13% of its population, some of it in battle, but mostly from the famine and from German war crimes. The Germans murdered the populations of 89 Greek villages and towns, burned to the ground more than 1,700 villages, and many of their inhabitants were executed; they reduced the country to rubble, and looted its archeological treasures.

**We request the German Government to honour its long-overdue obligations to Greece by repaying the forcibly obtained occupation loan, and by paying war reparations proportional to the material damages, atrocities and plundering committed by the German war machine.**

## **A PROGRAMME FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION GREECE 17 JUNE 2012**

### **SYRIZA**

#### **Ten commitments**

#### **The way out of the crisis is to the Left.**

##### **1. Make a shield to protect society from the crisis**

Not a single citizen shall be left without a guaranteed minimum income or unemployment benefit, medical care, social protection, housing and access to all public utilities; There shall be protection and relief for indebted households; There shall be price controls and price reductions, a reduction in VAT, and abolition of VAT on basic necessities.

## **2. Dispose of the debt burden**

The debt is first and foremost a product of class relations and is in its very essence inhumane. It is produced by tax evasion on the part of the rich, looting public funds, and the exorbitant procurement of military weapons and equipment.

*We seek the following immediate measures:*

A moratorium on debt servicing; negotiation to cancel debt, with provisions for social insurance funds and small savers' protection. This is to be pursued by exploiting any available means such as audit control and suspension of payments; regulation of the remaining debt with clauses providing for economic development and employment; European regulation of the debt of European States; radical changes to the role of the European Central Bank; prohibition of speculative banking products; a pan-European tax on wealth, financial transactions and profits.

## **3. Income redistribution, taxation of wealth, and the abolition of unnecessary expenses**

Reorganize and consolidate tax collection; tax fortunes of more than 1 million Euros and large-scale revenues; gradually increase to 45% the tax on profits distributed by limited companies; tax financial transactions; impose a special tax on luxury goods; remove tax exemptions given to ship owners and the Greek Orthodox Church; remove banking and merchant confidentiality; track down tax evasion and failure to pay social insurance contributions; ban transactions made through offshore companies; seek new resources via efficient exploitation of European funds, via claims for payment of the German occupation loan and of World War Two reparations, and via a steep reduction in military expenditure.

## **4. Productive, social and environmental reconstruction**

Nationalization/socialization of the banks and their integration in a public banking system under social and workers' control in order to serve developmental purposes. The scandal of the recapitalization of banks must stop immediately; nationalization of all public enterprises of strategic importance that have been privatized so far. Administration of public enterprises based on transparency, social control and democratic planning. Support for the provision of public goods; protection and consolidation of small and medium enterprises in the social sector and co-operatives.

Ecological transformation of the developmental model; this includes transforming the sectors of energy production, manufacturing, tourism and

agriculture. All these sectors are to be reformed according to criteria of nutritional abundance and fulfillment of social needs; develop scientific research and productive specialization.

### **5. Stable employment with decent wages and social insurance**

The constant degradation of labour, coupled with embarrassing wage levels, attracts neither investment, development, nor employment. We call for well-paid, well-regulated and insured employment; immediate restitution of the minimum wage, and of real wages within three years; immediate restitution of collective labour agreements; instigation of powerful control mechanisms to protect employment; systematic confrontation of lay-offs and deregulation of labour relations.

### **6. Deepening Democracy**

#### **Democratic, political and social rights for all**

There is a democratic deficit in the country. Greece is gradually being transformed into an authoritarian police state. We call for:

Refounding popular sovereignty and upgrading parliamentary power within the political system; instigating a proportional electoral system; separation of powers; revoking the law on ministerial responsibility, and abolition of MP's economic privileges; real decentralization and providing local government with sound resources and expanded jurisdiction; introducing direct democracy and institutions of self-management under workers' and social control at all levels; measures against political and economic corruption; the foundation of democratic, political and trade union rights; enhancing the rights of women and young people in the family, in work and in public administration; speeding up the asylum process; abolition of the Dublin II regulations and granting of travel papers to immigrants; social inclusion of immigrants and equal rights protection; democratic reform of public administration with the active participation of civil servants; demilitarization and democratization of the police and the coastguard; disband the special forces.

### **7. Powerful Welfare State**

The anti-insurance laws, the closure of social services, and the steep fall in social expenditure has rendered Greece a country where social injustice reigns. We need:

An immediate programme to rescue the pensions system that will include tripartite financing and a gradual return of the pension fund portfolios into one public, universal system of social insurance; an increase in unemployment benefits to 80% of the minimum wage; no unemployed

person is to be left without unemployment benefit; introduction of a guaranteed minimum income; a unified system of comprehensive social protection to cover those people in vulnerable social strata.

### **8. Health is a public good and a social right**

Health is to be provided for free and will be financed through a Public Health System. Immediate measures include support and upgrade of hospitals; upgrading health infrastructures of the Social Insurance Institute (IKA); developing an integrated system of first level medical care; stop lay-offs; cover the requirements of medical treatment in respect of personnel and equipment; free and costless access to medical treatment for all residents in the country; free medical examination and pharmaceutical treatment for pensioners on reduced means, the unemployed, students and those suffering chronic diseases.

### **9. Protection of public education, research, culture and sport from the Memorandum's policies**

Regarding education, we call for:

Consolidation of universal, public and free education; coverage of its urgent requirements of infrastructure and personnel at all three levels; compulsory 14-year unified education; revoke the Diamantopoulou Law; consolidate self-government of the universities; preserve the academic and public character of the universities.

### **10. Independent foreign policy committed to promoting peace**

Adapting our foreign policy to the exigencies of the United States and the powerful states of the European Union endangers the country's independence, peace and security. We need:

A multidimensional and peace-oriented foreign policy; disengagement from NATO and the closure of foreign military bases; termination of military co-operation with Israel; aiding the attempts of Cypriot people to reunite the island; furthermore, on the basis of international law and according to the principle of peaceful conflict resolution, we will pursue a solution to Greek-Turkish relations, a solution to the problem of FYROM'S official name, and an identification of Greece's Exclusive Economic Zone.

### **The current economic and social system has failed and we must overthrow it !**

The economic crisis rocking global capitalism has shattered illusions. Increasingly, people witness that capitalist speculation is an inhuman

organizational principle for modern society. It is also unanimously shared that private banks function only for the benefit of the bankers, harming the rest of the people. Industrialists and bankers absorb billions from health, education and pensions.

The exit from the crisis entails bold measures that will obstruct those who create it from continuing their destructive work. We are endorsing a new model of production and distribution of wealth, one that would include society in its totality. In this respect, the large capitalist property is to be made public and managed democratically according to social and ecological criteria. Our strategic aim is socialism with democracy, a system in which all will be entitled to participate in the decision-making process.

### **We are changing the future**

We can win by forging unity and creating a new coalition for power, with the Left as a cornerstone. Our weapon in this struggle is the alliance of the people; the inspiration, the creative effort, and the struggles of the working people. With these we will shape the life and the future of a self-governed people.

### **Now the vote is to the People! Now People have the power!**

In this election the Greek people can and must vote against the regime of Memoranda and Troika, thus turning a new page of hope and optimism for the future.

### **For Greece and for Europe, the solution is with the Left**