

A despatch from Athens

*There is no shortage of media coverage on Greece's current financial crisis. This piece, however, paints a different picture from most. It is written by **Thanasis Laskaratos** of **EPAM**, the Greek People's movement. EPAM is a cross-party campaigning organisation, similar to CIB.*

Alexis Tsipras, the Greek Prime Minister, announced a referendum on creditors' bailout demands, and even called for NO. It has been at least 30 years since Greece last held a referendum, so the decision was welcomed by the majority of Greek people.

Two days later the government decided to impose capital controls by shutting banks for a week and imposing limit on cash withdrawals (60,00€ per cardholder, per day). Public officials were paid normally on the 27th and the 28th of June, unlike pensioners, who need to line up at specific banks, open exclusively for them, to withdraw a maximum of 120€. The private sector was equally left to its fate. The ECB embargoed Greece but the government didn't take any measures whatsoever to calm down the people who were left suddenly without any cash or to find a solution for paying the country's pensioners.

To ordinary people, voting YES equates to staying within the EU and Eurozone and NO equates to the opposite. This is indeed the real meaning of this referendum, despite the Greek government's intentions and efforts to persuade people otherwise. No wonder why the percentage planning to vote NO, although initially standing at 54% at the beginning of the week. has tended to fall these last few days according to the *EuObserver* newspaper. Unsurprisingly, there is an unprecedented amount of propaganda in favour of YES by just

almost all media within the country as well as by a bunch of singers (like Nana Mouskouri), actors, university professors, TV-starlets and other celebrities.

As expected, the tactics of the YES campaign have been characterised by fear and distortion of the truth. There were two big rallies in Athens last weekend – on 29th June by NO supporters and on 30th June by YES supporters. The NO gathering received 8.43 minutes of news coverage as opposed to 46.83 minutes for the YES gathering. No one in the media will admit that voting YES means more unemployment, more suicides, more taxes, more homeless people and more misery. They just call it the 'bail-out program'.

And meanwhile, what has the government done? Besides letting the pensioners line up at the banks – thus deliberately causing panic – it has offered extra guarantees of 1.91 billion Euros to Eurobank and another 4.92 billion euros to Ethniki Bank. So on the one hand, the government is happy to protect bankrupted banks at the taxpayers' expense, but on the other, when it comes to pensions and salaries the government does nothing.

At the same time Mr Tsipras has submitted a new proposal to the creditors. The new proposal aims 'to settle the ESM financing so that the debt becomes sustainable while emphasis is given on the growth perspective'. In other words, Greek taxpayers will pay off the IMF with ESM's money at at least double the interest rate, thus putting Greece under ESM, a mechanism that works like a super-state which is able to dismantle the entire country.

For all his efforts, Mr Tsipras really sides with the YES campaign even though he publicly supports NO. In this he is just like the communist party, KKE, who suggest spoiling the ballot papers. This coming referendum will make many masks fall down and reveal where the politicians and their parties really stand.

Thanasis has also confirmed a report that the Greek government destroyed its printing presses in the run-up to joining the Euro. If it is forced to return to the Drachma, the banknotes will have to be printed in the UK or France.