

# The reactionary character of MERA25: Criticism of the Gaza genocide, while simultaneously supporting the NATO war against Russia

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MERA25, the German offshoot of the European DiEM25 movement led by former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, focuses on the question of the Gaza genocide in the European election campaign.

In its statements and election broadcasts, the party condemns the genocide of the Palestinians, castigates the complicity of the German government and allows Palestinian doctors to speak out, describing the horrific conditions on the ground. Their representatives regularly participate in anti-genocide demonstrations and are therefore, like other opponents of genocide—including Jewish organizations—exposed to massive state repression.

For example, MERA25 was involved in the organisation of the Palestine Congress on 12 April in Berlin, which was brutally suppressed by the police. Varoufakis himself was initially banned from entering Germany by the German authorities, who then imposed a general political ban on him. In a statement from MERA25, it is stated that Varoufakis has therefore “sued the German authorities for violation of his fundamental rights and defamation” and announced that, if necessary, he would also “sue in the European courts.”

The Socialist Equality Party condemns the ban on Varoufakis in the strongest possible terms. Obviously, this is not just about the former finance minister, with whom the German state worked closely at the time to enforce the EU austerity diktat against the Greek working class.

The action is part of a sweeping assault on democratic rights and aims to suppress any social and political opposition. Under conditions in which the ruling class is resorting to the extreme method of genocide, preparing a direct NATO war against Russia, massively arming and planning historic attacks on the working class, the ruling class is establishing a police state.

MERA25 castigates this development in words but has no perspective to oppose it. On the contrary, its criticism of genocide and its phrases about “internationalism,” “peace,” “democracy” and “social justice” are aimed at preventing an independent socialist movement against fascism and war, and at saving capitalism and its institutions. A closer study of the program and the history of MERA25 and its European parent party DiEM25 underlines the thoroughly reactionary and anti-worker character of this project.

## Varoufakis’s past

This can be seen first and foremost in the origins of the tendency that

Varoufakis, like all political charlatans and opportunists, is trying to cover up. When MERA25 denounces “oligarchic power structures” in its election program and declares: “What we are experiencing today is the result of political decisions that favor the few in our society and forget the many,” this is the height of hypocrisy.

As finance minister of the pseudo-left Syriza government, Varoufakis himself was responsible for these “political decisions” that strengthened “oligarchic power structures,” favored “the few,” i.e., the financial elites, and at the same time plunged “the many,” i.e., the working population, into abject poverty. The Syriza government under Alexis Tsipras, of which he was a member for almost half a year, was elected in early 2015 because it promised to end the austerity measures dictated by the troika of the European Central Bank (ECB), the EU Commission and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In power, Syriza betrayed this mandate within a few weeks and signed a new EU memorandum that went far beyond the austerity measures of the previous social democratic and conservative governments. When an overwhelming majority of 61 percent voted against the austerity dictate in a referendum in July 2015, Syriza not only ignored this, but again intensified the austerity measures and increasingly suppressed the resistance with police violence.

Varoufakis was at the heart of this conspiracy, which Syriza implemented in alliance with the far-right Independent Greeks (Anel). He did not appeal to the broad opposition to austerity in the European and international working class, but conspired behind the scenes with the European elites to hold talks on a slightly modified austerity policy.

Later Varoufakis boasted to the *British Observer* that he had proposed “normal, Thatcher and Reagan-oriented” economic measures at those meetings. He even praised the German Chancellor at the time, Angela Merkel (Christian Democrats), who pushed for the social destruction of Greece in the interests of German and European finance capital, as the “smartest politician in Europe.” And the notoriously right-wing German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, who was even more aggressive, was described by Varoufakis as “possibly the only European politician with intellectual substance.”

## Gaza genocide

There is no doubt that Varoufakis and MERA25 would betray the Palestinian masses, just as Syriza betrayed the Greek workers, if they had

the opportunity to do so as a ruling party. Just as it was not possible to end the austerity dictates against Greece by appealing to Brussels and Berlin, it is not possible to stop the genocide in Gaza by appealing to the leading imperialist powers.

Their support for Israel's genocide is not an oversight but has deep objective causes. As the WSWS pointed out in its New Year's perspective, it "can only be understood and explained in the context of the collapse of the imperialist and [capitalist] world system divided into rival nation-states."

For Washington, Brussels and Berlin, Israel acts as an extended arm to assert their economic and geostrategic interests throughout the Middle East and beyond. The annihilation and expulsion of the Palestinians by the Israeli army is ultimately part of the goal of also eliminating Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Iran, escalating the war offensive against Russia and China, and redividing the world among the imperialist powers.

The fight against genocide therefore requires—like the fight against the constant escalation of the Ukraine war by US-NATO and the associated attacks on social and democratic rights—the independent mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program. The Socialist Equality Party writes in its election programme for the European elections:

Such a movement must be directed against capitalism itself. The Ukraine war shows that the peaceful unification of Europe under capitalism is a reactionary illusion. The EU is arming itself to the teeth, waging war against Russia, supporting the genocide in Gaza and serving as an instrument for attacks on workers across the continent.

Workers must oppose the EU of the banks and corporations, mass death and war with the perspective of a United Socialist States of Europe. The war cannot be ended, human lives cannot be saved, and wages cannot be defended without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and putting them under democratic control. Instead of shooting at each other, Russian and Ukrainian workers and workers throughout Europe must fight with this perspective against the warmongers at home.

MERA25 and Varoufakis vehemently reject this only viable and progressive perspective. They do not oppose imperialism but formulate an alternative program for it and foster the illusion that capitalism can be reconciled with the needs of the masses.

### **Militaristic agenda**

Their election program is an explicit commitment to the capitalist EU and to an independent European foreign policy. "We want an independent and non-aligned European Union that is committed to global peace," it says. "Europe must stand up courageously against all aggressors from every bloc and, based on the UN Charter, work for peaceful conflict solutions."

Sentences such as these could be similarly found in the election program of the established parties or come from the mouth of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz or French President Emmanuel Macron. They all disguise their goal of making Europe an independent or sovereign power with phrases about peace and international law. In fact, they are working to rearm Europe and make it "war-ready" (Defense Minister Pistorius) in

order to enforce the interests of European imperialism against Russia and China, and increasingly against the US.

MERA25 essentially supports this militaristic agenda. In a recent interview with the pseudo-left *Jacobin* magazine, the party's leading candidate for the European elections, Karin de Rigo, describes "the idea of a European army" as "initially good." At the same time, she urged: "If we were to build a European army, the member states would have to give up their national defenses. We don't need double armies."

She also criticises the fact that "all defence spending is also demanded by NATO, which is not necessarily in our interest." In other words, MERA25 calls for a truly European force that could then intervene independently of US-led NATO.

In the same interview, de Rigo leaves no doubt that MERA25 fully supports the NATO war against Russia. Russia must, of course, "be seen as an aggressor," Rigo explains, supporting the official narrative that Putin's invasion of Ukraine was "unprovoked." Not a word is uttered about the systematic encirclement of Russia by the NATO powers and the aggressive escalation policy in the Ukraine war.

Putin's war is reactionary, but it is the desperate response of the Russian oligarchs to NATO's aggressive policy aimed at annexing Ukraine and subjugating Russia. They use the Ukrainian people as cannon fodder for their imperialist goals.

These goals are largely supported by MERA25. An article entitled "When and how will the war in Ukraine end?", which appeared on the Diem25 website in May 2022, not only expresses solidarity with the NATO war offensive but also with the war goal of overthrowing the Putin regime and replacing it with a pro-Western puppet regime.

"A profound solution to the military and economic crisis cannot be achieved as long as Putin is in power in Russia. The abandonment of devious expansionist projects can only take place through a replacement of the Russian leadership," it says.

It continued: "The unmistakable attitude of the West towards Putin leaves no room for accommodation. Therefore, the number of victims and the extent of the destruction in Ukraine, as well as the suffering and deprivation that will affect the entire planet, will depend on the speed with which Putin will be replaced by the Russian elites."

DiEM25 conceals its support for the imperialist war and regime change project with the same propaganda lies as the NATO governments themselves. "If, in the current historical and political context, the Ukrainian people have decided to defend their freedom to choose their own destiny, and if the destiny they want to build at the moment is to join the West and NATO, then we can do nothing but take note of this and ultimately support it."

While NATO crosses one red line after another to defeat the nuclear-armed power Russia, DiEM25 participates in downplaying the danger of a nuclear-led third world war. This is central to further escalating the NATO offensive and suppressing resistance to it. In the same DiEM25 article, there are phrases such as: "An escalation of the conflict in other parts of Europe or the world is unlikely." And "The risk of a nuclear attack also seems low."

### **Civic interests**

By backing the EU and NATO aggression against Russia, MERA25 also makes it clear that it will not engage in a serious fight against the genocide in Gaza, which is being instigated by the same powers. The war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza are two fronts of a global conflict over the imperialist redivision of the world. MERA25 operates entirely within the framework of this war offensive and the capitalist system that

produces it and merely expresses criticism of the tactical orientation of one of the war fronts in Gaza.

Just as Varoufakis defended the EU with Syriza and claimed that it could end austerity, today he defends imperialism with MERA25, fomenting the illusion that it could be organized without genocide and nuclear war. The spreading capitalist barbarism proves the opposite and also exposes the political bankruptcy of MERA25.

Its social and humanitarian phrases are merely a cover for the aggressive warmongering against Russia and the call for an independent European great power policy. Just like the betrayal of Syriza in Greece, the positions have their roots in the class interests of the layers for which MERA25 speaks.

Despite some radical demands, MERA25 is a thoroughly bourgeois party, based on wealthy layers of the petty bourgeoisie. Under conditions of genocide and war and the rapidly developing opposition to it, they are desperate to defend their privileges by trying to “save capitalism from itself,” as Varoufakis once put it. In other words: from a socialist revolution of the working class.

Anyone who seriously wants to fight against genocide, world war and the associated attack on social and democratic rights must take up this very struggle for international socialism, vote for the SGP on 9 June and build the International Committee of the Fourth International as the new revolutionary leadership. A clear political reckoning with the essentially pro-militarist and pro-capitalist orientation of pseudo-left opponents of the working class such as MERA25 is urgently needed.



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