

Letter from Europe

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Imagination is essential in politics, but fantasies and fata morganas can be deadly. It remains a mystery how Catalan leaders could ever have expected Brussels to come to their rescue. The EU is owned by its member states, which use it as a tool to impose on their countries policies that they would not be able to impose on their own.

Independence, sovereignty, autonomy for societies underrepresented in present nation-states must be gained at home, and in fact against a united front of European Union member states. And once the battle will be won, if it ever will, elevation of the new state to EU membership will come only with the assent of the old state.

Secessionists better prepare for life outside the EU.

Political dreams must include a path from here to there; else they are no more than entertainment. History can produce a future only out of material that it has produced in the past; it is not a street car where you can get off at pleasure. Institutions include rules that regulate how they may be changed. If these are found too constraining, they must be overthrown; this is called a revolution. But before one tries one, one should count one's troops and compare them to the enemy's. Start a fire only if there is a reasonable prospect that it won't burn yourself.

Yannis Varoufakis does not help the cause of European progress by drawing a cheerful picture of a "Europe of the Regions", where small regional polities take the place of the nation-states of today. Before we know exactly how power would be divided between Glasgow, Barcelona, Munich, Milan, Venice and the like on the one hand and Brussels on the other, we might do well to worry that regionalization would

transfer sovereignty upwards rather than decentralizing it. More immediately, Varoufakis must explain how the Constitutional Convention will be created and composed that is to replace nation-states with regions as the EU's constituent units – and how such replacement will pass national referenda and national parliaments. Is it conceivable that EU member states will set up a convention in order to turn the Europe of the nation-states into a “Europe of the Regions”? That France, for example, will be happy to be dissected in four or five parts?

The alternative would be a revolutionary assembly, nothing less. Who will call it? Who will compose it? Who will make sure that its members won't be locked up by their national governments for high treason and sedition? If one cannot call a revolutionary convention in one's home state, for example Spain, why expect to call one in “Europe”? The way things are, *fata morgana*s apart, any “refounding of Europe” has to start bottom-up, using the available political tools of national democracies, including strikes, demonstrations, civil disobedience, elections, in the hope of becoming at some point strong enough to dictate to the states and governments of the day. Don't wait for Brussels – and don't try to do the last step before the first.