

The end of my European dream

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The imposition of German demands on Greece, without consideration for its democracy, sovereignty or interests, is one of those moments that changes everything.

I grew up with a European dream. Born in 1958 I was politically aware from a very young age. Much informed my early views, but most influences were, inevitably, personal. I wanted comprehensive education because of the damage the 11 plus caused to my family. I was always interested in Ireland because of my obvious family connections. And Europe mattered because I never met the grandfather who gave me my name as he died as a result of service in the Royal Navy during the Second World War.

I recall the 1974 EU referendum. I was for Yes, unlike many I knew. I had reservations, but not many when I made up my mind, because I was young. My reasoning was simple: this was a means to prevent the risk of war and to replace it with cooperation. That was good enough for me, but forgive me because I had not by then studied all the flaws in economic thinking on which the Common Market (as it was back then) was based.

Through thick and thin I have stuck with Europe. That's been tested time after time by the neoliberal dogma it has espoused that has caused so much harm even when, on issues like tax, the EU has overall been a force for good.

But there come moments when eyes are opened, and yesterday was such a moment. If the Greeks did not believe that the Germans would try to destroy their democracy, remove their fiscal sovereignty and transfer their epicentre of power to Brussels, then nor did I. I thought that when you signed up to a deal like the euro it was akin to a marriage: for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer.

I was wrong. That is not what the Germans thought. This was, to them, just a deal. And the deal was about money, and nothing else. It was a banker's deal: one where conscience, obligation and respect were all missing. Where the ability to repay, come what may, was all that mattered, with security to be taken (even when not specified in

advance) with menaces attached in the event of failure to make the scheduled commitments.

And Germany's view prevailed.

In which case this is no longer a Europe I can subscribe to.

This is not about dreams.

Or peace.

And fraternity.

This is about the raw, cold, power of money where that power is used to subjugate, oppress and demean.

That is not a Europe I want a part of.

I will have to think hard on this issue. Dreams should not die overnight. But it's hard to see how this one has not. Or how I could now support continuing membership of the EU.

How, I have to ask, could any democrat do so?

Or any genuine (as opposed to neoliberal) libertarian?

Or a dreamer, come to that?

It feels very much as if my dream is over. And that I do not like what I see in the dawn.