

An interview with OKDE-Spartakos of Greece's Antarsya coalition

Alex Lantier**7 June 2010**

World Socialist Web Site reporters interviewed Iannis Felekis, a leading member of OKDE-Spartakos, while in Athens to report on the Greek debt crisis and the reaction to the austerity policies being imposed by Prime Minister Giorgios Papandreou and the major international banks.

OKDE-Spartakos is the faction of the Antarsya coalition affiliated with the French *Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste* (NPA) of Olivier Besancenot. Antarsya (Anticapitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow) is a federation of petty-bourgeois parties posing as friendly critics of the larger Syriza coalition and the Stalinist Greek Communist Party (KKE). These groups are increasingly compromised by their collaboration with Papandreou's social democratic PASOK party.

Despite widespread popular anger against Papandreou, OKDE-Spartakos does not call for his overthrow or removal from office. It aims to divert left-wing opposition to Syriza and the KKE into politically harmless channels.

Felekis criticised Papandreou for leading "a state intervention for neo-liberal measures and finance capital." As for the other "left" parties, he said: "Syriza consists of moderate reformists. They say how one could improve the deficit; they give instructions to the government, basically. The KKE is very Stalinist. They say they're against capitalism in general, but they have no ability to act in the concrete situation and they promote Stalin and Brezhnev."

Felekis's verbal opposition is hollow, however, as Felekis and OKDE-Spartakos are determined to continue working with the political establishment.

Asked about OKDE-Spartakos's attitude to Papandreou, he said: "In the population, the situation is quite ripe for a call to remove the government. The

problem is that there is no alternative in the labour movement to Papandreou."

Manifestly, Felekis includes his own party among those that offer no alternative to Papandreou. Asked what Antarsya's goals were, Felekis replied: "It's difficult to say. We will try to help this movement to grow."

Such abstract comments only dodge the critical questions: What class politically controls the strike movement, and what is the role of Antarsya and the other "left" tendencies?

While the strikes involve millions of workers, they are controlled politically by PASOK, which functions as a political arm of the major international banks. The Papandreou government has ridden out several strikes in isolated industries and allowed the PASOK-led GSEE trade union to organise several one-day national strikes, each separated from the other by weeks or even months. The strikes have done nothing to halt Papandreou's repeated cuts in pensions, wages and jobs.

Presenting this strike campaign uncritically as an independent mass movement and concealing the manner in which it is being used by the unions and the regime to dissipate and contain the anger of the working class is an exercise in political falsification. The GSEE organises these strikes precisely to prop up the illusion, which is growing increasingly threadbare among the workers, that such strikes will change Papandreou's policy. They are called to preempt and block political action against the government.

A real struggle against Papandreou requires a political offensive against PASOK and its "left" appendages on the basis of a revolutionary socialist programme, and an organisational break with the GSEE through the formation of independent factory committees.

However, OKDE-Spartakos, like the NPA in France and its co-thinkers internationally, is determined to work with the ruling parties and the GSEE. Felekis explained: “Though our groups or currents are against participating in government and managing the system, we can have a united front based on the immediate problems we face, while at the same time trying to solve our strategic differences.”

This “united front” is with the other “left” parties, including PASOK—the party carrying out the cuts! Speaking of strikes organised by the GSEE, Felekis said, “It’s OK if social democrats help the mobilisation.... Usually, the social democrats are hostile, but if they help in the mobilisation, it is OK.”

Translated into plain speech, Felekis’s comment amounts to this: While saying it will not participate in an austerity government, Antarsya uncritically participates in demonstrations organised by that government, while engaging in talks to argue away whatever political differences it has with the ruling parties. Whatever its “left” criticisms of Syriza, Antarsya has no principled differences with its petty-bourgeois politics.



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