

Greek “left” prepares new trap for the working class

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Greece’s trade unions and pseudo-socialist parties have ruled out any attempt to mobilize the working class in a political struggle against the new technocratic regime in Athens, installed at the behest of the European and American financial elite. Instead, they are advancing the perspective of a bourgeois “left” unity government to smother working class opposition to the new government and its austerity program.

International finance capital, working through the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, imposed the new regime in the face of mounting popular hostility to the latest austerity measures proposed by PASOK Prime Minister George Papandreou. The international media and European governments denounced Papandreou’s October 31 proposal to legitimize these policies by submitting them to a popular referendum. The very notion that the people should have a say in the implementation of policies that will impoverish millions to prop up the banks was condemned as irresponsible and intolerable.

Over the same period Papandreou suddenly sacked the entire top military leadership of Greece, indicating that he feared the direct intervention of the military, possibly in the form of a coup. (See: “Are Obama and NATO plotting a military coup in Greece?”)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the EU leadership issued an ultimatum: Greece would not receive 8 billion euros in bailout funds needed to avoid a default on its debt and would be thrown out of the euro zone unless Papandreou was removed and replaced by a “national unity” government headed by a trusted agent of finance capital.

The new “technocratic” government, headed by former European Central Bank Vice President Lucas Papademos, has defined its mandate as the imposition of the new round of cuts in jobs, wages, pensions and social programs demanded by the EU, the IMF and the banks. The government is a grand coalition of the social democratic PASOK party, the conservative New Democracy (ND)

party, and the far-right People’s Orthodox Rally (LAOS).

In agreeing to take up the post of prime minister, Papademos made it clear that he was not bound by pledges to hold new elections by February and that the coalition parties had agreed not to inject “politics” into the process of imposing the austerity measures. This de facto ban on political dissent will doubtless be used to criminalize any popular resistance to these attacks.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) wrote that the new government would be a “black front” against the population. It criticized the government for including LAOS, which it attacked as the “ideological descendants of the dictator Metaxas,” whose military regime ruled Greece from 1936 to 1941.

The chairman of the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza), Alexis Tsipras, said that the new government would have “no democratic legitimacy” and was “a blatant distortion of popular sovereignty.”

Nonetheless, neither these nor any of the other “left” organizations called for any action by the working class to bring down or even challenge the new government. Greece’s main private-sector union confederation, the GSEE, did not call a single action. It declared on November 2 that it had no position on government coalition negotiations and that it would base decisions on whether to call strikes on “political developments.”

ADEDY, its public-sector counterpart, responded similarly. It called a token three-hour strike for next Tuesday, limited to government workers in Athens and Thessaloniki. This action, which will do nothing to prevent the government from pushing through its attacks on public-sector workers, is designed to give the union some political cover while it collaborates with the new regime, and to allow the anger of the workers to find harmless expression in a toothless protest.

The “left” parties are calling for a regroupment that would unite their forces and lay the basis for a future collaboration with PASOK, should PASOK’s current coalition with the right-wing parties collapse.

Tsipras responded to the new government by calling for all the “progressive and democratic forces” to join together. Although Tsipras left it unstated, such a coalition would have to include at least large sections of PASOK to be powerful enough to govern. Syriza not only collaborates with PASOK at the local level, it has repeatedly offered a coalition at the federal level.

The Anti-Capitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow (Antarsya) coalition, in which the state capitalist Socialist Workers Party (SEK) participates, is calling for a “united front” of the trade unions, the KKE, Syriza and other so-called “left” forces.

Xekinima, the Greek section of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), is not only calling for a “united front,” it is promoting the illusion that organizations like the KKE, Syriza and the trade unions—which it calls the “left”—could adopt “a socialist programme and fight decisively for systemic change.”

Such claims are a political lie. A government coalition of these organizations and PASOK forces would continue the attacks on the working class. All of these organizations played a critical role in providing political cover for Papandreou. They supported the isolation and defeat of workers’ strikes, in some cases by means of state repression, when they threatened to seriously impact the Greek economy and weaken the regime.

Similar governments across Europe have proved deeply reactionary. The 2006-2008 Prodi government in Italy backed by Rifondazione Comunista imposed deep social cuts and participated in imperialist wars. The Social Democratic-Left Party government in Berlin carried out major attacks on social programs and the jobs and conditions of public sector workers.

The policies of a similar “left” bourgeois regime in Greece would be even more right-wing, given the sharpness of the economic and political crisis in Europe and internationally. Such a government would work to demoralize the working class, paving the way for a dictatorial police regime.

The counterrevolutionary policies of the pseudo-left organizations are rooted in their class orientation. Drawn mainly from the affluent middle class and the state and trade union bureaucracies, they are bitterly hostile to any independent movement of the working class against the political establishment and the capitalist system which it defends. They move ever further to the right as social tensions and the capitalist crisis deepen. All across Europe, so-called “left” tendencies are preparing to join governments to implement social cuts and defend the interests of the financial elite.

Syriza’s sister party in Germany, the Left Party, has claimed to be the only organization with a “constructive and

viable solution to the crisis” in Greece. According to the party’s left figurehead, Sarah Wagenknecht, this solution includes the nationalization of insolvent banks and the wholesale printing of euros to fund state budgets. These measures, based on a fatal underestimation of the fundamental and systemic character of the global economic crisis, would, if enacted, mean a further bailout of the banking system and the destitution of the working class in the form of hyper-inflation.

Capitalist governments often nationalize insolvent banks in order to transfer the burden of the banks’ debts to the public. An inflationary policy of printing money would lead to a massive decline in the value of wages and savings.

The “left” parties’ orientation to PASOK and the trade union bureaucracy makes them deeply complicit in the anti-democratic maneuvers of PASOK with the international financial aristocracy and the Greek armed forces. They cannot and will not spell out the character of PASOK’s collaboration with these forces.

Under the headline “Resistance Pushes Out Greek Leader,” Greece’s SEK argues that the imposition of the new government of the banks is an achievement of the working class. According to them, the new coalition is even “a humiliation for New Democracy.”

This is a treacherous effort to blind the working class to the dangers it faces and leave it completely unprepared for the intensification of repression that is coming.

Xekinima also downplays the significance of the new government. Pretending nothing has changed, they wrote on Tuesday: “The policies the new coalition government will pursue will be the same as those that have been pursued up until now.”

These organizations downplay the threat of dictatorship because they have no principled differences with the austerity measures of the new regime and oppose the revolutionary mobilization of the working class in the fight for socialism. Significantly, Syriza criticized Papandreou for sacking the Greek military chiefs, bolstering forces in the Greek political establishment pressing for a military coup.



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