

The threat of dictatorship in Greece

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The installation by the banks and major imperialist powers of a “national unity” government in Greece that includes members of the fascistic LAOS party, as well as the designation of the right-wing New Democracy party to head the defense ministry, must be taken as a serious warning to the Greek and international working class.

Thirty-eight years after student protests at the Polytechnic in Athens on November 17, 1973, whose bloody suppression ultimately brought down the US-backed junta of the colonels, finance capital is again considering the imposition of military rule or fascist dictatorship to suppress the workers.

Ousted PASOK Prime Minister George Papandreu had mobilized the army to suppress strikes against the austerity measures he was carrying out at the behest of the banks and European institutions. In August 2010, soldiers broke the strike by truckers against the deregulation of their profession. In October of this year, the government placed striking refuse workers under military discipline and forced them back to work.

On February 4, 2011, *Athens News Agency* reported that the army’s 71st airborne brigade had staged a mock battle with anti-austerity protesters. The exercise included methods for controlling “feuding parties” as well as “conflict deterrence” and “crowd evacuation.”

There is a barely concealed debate within the ruling class over whether to scrap all democratic procedures and move openly towards authoritarian rule. In May, a CIA report declared that a coup in Greece was a possibility. In September, retired army officers rioted, after which the Association of Support and Cooperation of the State Armed Forces, the professional association of full-time soldiers, warned Papandreu in a letter that the army was following his policies “with increased concern.” Defense Minister Panos Beglitis denounced the officers for acting as “a state within a state.”

Shortly before Papandreu resigned, he and Beglitis

sacked the entire General Staff of the armed forces, leading to widespread suspicions that a coup had been narrowly averted. This followed a massive two-day general strike and new demands from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund that Athens impose even more sweeping layoffs and wage and pension cuts. It preceded the furious reaction of the financial markets to Papandreu’s proposal for a popular referendum on the new austerity measures.

All of the sacked military chiefs had been appointed by the previous New Democracy government. Now New Democracy is once again in charge of defense, and the new defense minister, Dimitris Avramopoulos, has pledged to reverse the sackings.

The inclusion of LAOS in the government is particularly ominous. The move was not strictly required to gain a majority and form a new government. But the new regime’s backers among the international financial elite and the Greek bourgeoisie decided to include LAOS in order to send a political signal.

Fascistic sentiment is being cultivated and made “respectable” again, because xenophobia, nationalism and anti-Semitism are a basis for mobilizing the most reactionary and diseased layers of society against the working class.

Founded in 2000, LAOS became a focal point of the Greek far right, unabashedly appealing to the traditional themes of European fascism. At the founding congress, LAOS leader George Karatzafiris stated: “They say that to get ahead you have to be one of three things: a Jew, a homosexual or a communist. We are none of these.” He called for a LAOS vote to obtain “a parliament without Masons, without homosexuals, without those dependent on Zionism.”

LAOS has repeatedly called for military dictatorship. Its founding statement proposes that political decisions be made by a council including military officers and Church officials. It is an enthusiastic supporter of social

cuts and opposed the partial write-down of Greek debt agreed to by the European Union in October.

One of LAOS's ideologists is the anti-Semite and Holocaust denier Kostas Pleveris, who was their leading candidate in the 2004 elections. His son, Athanasios, became a member of parliament in 2007. In 2006, Kostas Pleveris published the book *Jews—The Whole Truth*, in which he praises Adolf Hitler and calls for the extermination of the Jews. He depicts Jews as sub-humans who defame the Nazis. He describes himself as a “Nazi, fascist, racist, anti-democrat, anti-Semitic.”

Adonis Georgiadis, the new state secretary in the economy ministry, promoted the book on television, highlighting its “wealth of arguments.”

The promotion of such forces is the financial aristocracy's response to the initial stages of the political reemergence of the working class and the growth of popular protest—starting with the Egyptian revolution, through to the mass demonstrations and strikes in Europe and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States. As in Egypt, where the military junta jails, tortures and murders oppositionists, and the US, where the police brutally attack Occupy protesters, the ruling class in Europe is preparing violent repression and police-state rule.

These threats have a great political resonance, given the tragic experiences of the Greek people. In 1967, the CIA and NATO backed the military coup led by George Papadopoulos in a bid to preempt a movement by the working class against capitalist rule throughout Europe. The colonels brutally suppressed every expression of working class opposition. They arrested and tortured tens of thousands of people and built concentration camps on the islands of Gyaros and Leros.

By bringing to power the successors of the Greek junta, the financial aristocracy is threatening the working class not only in Greece, but throughout Europe and the world. “European leaders fear that the same protests and strikes will take place in their own countries,” Dimitris Dimitriadis, a leading European Union consultant, told the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet*. This prospect and how to prevent it, he said, was the subject of a November 16 meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee. “This problem is not just related to Greece,” he added.

The reemergence of the threat of dictatorship deals a shattering blow to the claims—made after the fall of the Greek junta and the fascist regimes in Portugal and Spain, and especially after the Stalinist liquidation of the Soviet Union in 1991—that the institutions of the European Union, in alliance with Washington, would oversee the triumph of democratic capitalism.

Instead, global capitalism is mired in crisis, the political system in every Western country is threatened with collapse, and bourgeois democracy is putrefying before the eyes of the world. The decision of international finance capital to respond by promoting LAOS in Greece testifies to the collapse of democratic sentiment in the international bourgeoisie.

In the fight against this threat, Greek workers face not only the ruling class, but also the political treachery of the social democratic parties and their satellites in the Stalinist, Pabloite and other pseudo-left organizations. Inextricably tied to the state and the trade union bureaucracies, which reveal themselves ever more nakedly to be agencies of the ruling class, these forces have mounted no serious struggle against the new government.

The fight against the social attacks of the financial elite comes together with the struggle against the growing assault on democratic rights. The only social force that retains a commitment to democratic rights and is capable of defending them is the working class. What is required is the forging of the unity of the working class across Europe and its independent struggle for political power on the basis of a socialist program.

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