

Greek crisis exposes bankruptcy of petty-bourgeois ex-left

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Rising working class opposition to failed policies of social austerity that are devastating Greece is exposing the bankruptcy of Europe's petty-bourgeois "anti-capitalist left." Terrified by the escalating European debt crisis, they are increasingly divided over how to reconcile their "anti-capitalist" phrase-mongering with their pro-capitalist politics.

These divisions have emerged in the Pabloite United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI)—which includes groups like France's New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) and Portugal's Left Bloc (BE). On June 1, a group of Irish affiliates of the USFI, Socialist Democracy, published a letter from the USFI's Greek section, OKDE, attacking the USFI Executive Bureau's endorsement of the Greek party SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left).

SYRIZA has received up to 25 to 30 percent of the voting intentions in polls for the June 17 elections, which would put it in the lead and allow it to possibly form a government. Drawn from professionals and state and trade union officials, it speaks for elements of the Greek bourgeoisie angry with bailouts previous Greek governments negotiated with the European Union (EU), and who want to renegotiate the terms. Its criticisms of EU austerity measures have attracted support from broader layers of voters, however, seeking to voice opposition to EU austerity policies.

The USFI Executive Bureau statement unequivocally endorses SYRIZA for occupying "a central place in the Greek political situation" with its five-point plan. It lists SYRIZA's five points: "abolition" of austerity measures, nationalizing banks that received state funds, halting Greek debt payments while it audits Greece's sovereign debt, abolishing ministers' immunity from prosecution, and changing Greek electoral law. The Executive Bureau calls on "all those who defend the ideals of the Left" to support SYRIZA's program.

In fact, the USFI is standing fully behind the cynical politics of SYRIZA, which signals limited opposition to austerity policies, while reassuring international investors that it will do nothing against the basic interests of finance capital and of the Greek bourgeoisie.

In interviews internationally, SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras has said that he is trying to keep Greece in the euro zone, in order to repay the banks. If this fails, and Greece is expelled from the euro zone, he is in off-the-record talks with the Greek army and finance officials, apparently to try to ensure that the Greek state can keep order, suppressing bank runs or popular protests.

SYRIZA's program is a blind alley for the workers. It is not a program to mobilize the Greek and international working class in a revolutionary struggle against capitalism, but for a Greek capitalist government which would have no resources to carry out the promises

it half-heartedly makes. This government will be at the financial mercy of Greece's EU creditors, its promises undermined by the objective class conflicts tearing at European society.

The banks want hundreds of billions of euros from impoverished Greece, and Greek bourgeois want to protect similar sums stashed in overseas accounts. Yet simply undoing the EU's most prominent cuts would mean boosting Greek workers' wages by 40 percent or more, while making immense increases in health and education spending. There is not enough money to satisfy the demands of both finance capital and the working class; an irreconcilable class conflict is rapidly coming to a head.

Expecting that the financial situation will explode, SYRIZA is quietly preparing for the worst while publicly promoting pious hopes that, once elected, it will reconcile everyone and engineer a miraculous reversal of the downward economic spiral EU cuts have provoked in Greece.

By endorsing SYRIZA, the USFI is exposing itself as a bourgeois organization that, despite its fraudulent "anti-capitalist" label, is not opposed to capitalism, or even to austerity policies. OKDE is frightened at being exposed in this fashion and argues for better trying to cover the USFI's tracks, to prevent the USFI's endorsement of SYRIZA from shattering the credibility of its bogus "anti-capitalist" politics.

Protesting that it "was not even consulted before the publication" of the USFI's endorsement of SYRIZA, OKDE warns: "It is clear that the political objectives of SYRIZA remain definitively within the framework of capitalism and bourgeois democracy."

OKDE notes that the USFI describes itself at the end of its articles on its web site, *International Viewpoint*, as "'an international organization struggling for the socialist revolution [and] composed of sections, of militants who accept and apply its principles and program.' The time has come, however, to honestly ask ourselves: what principles, what program?"

While political honesty would unquestionably be a major change of course for the USFI, OKDE cannot deliver it or give any coherent explanation of its own bankruptcy and confusion. OKDE's own letter establishes in a fairly devastating fashion that while it claims to be part of an "organization struggling for the socialist revolution," this is simply not the case.

As the USFI's national section in Greece, OKDE is angry that the USFI Executive Bureau set USFI policy in Greece without consulting it. It tartly notes that the USFI's action contradicts its long-held view that it is "not the proper role" of the USFI's international bodies "to publicly criticize sections regarding their national 'tactics.'"

OKDE does not examine the principled issue this raises: that the

USFI is not an organization of national sections working out a world policy based on the interests of the international working class, but a collection of bourgeois parties individually working out national tactics. Instead, it produces a remarkable, though hardly exhaustive list of the USFI's reactionary actions over the past decade. It uses the list to contrast the USFI's rapid move to force OKDE into an alliance with SYRIZA with its hands-off approach to other national sections' affairs.

"This was the approach," OKDE writes, "when the comrades in Mexico endorsed the campaign of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for president, running as the candidate of the bourgeois PRD; in Brazil when the [pro-USFI] Socialist Democracy current chose to politically support the neo-liberal government of Lula in the months immediately after he was elected president; in Italy when a comrade in the Senate voted to fund the war in Afghanistan, justifying this by the need to follow the discipline of *Rifondazione*; in Denmark when the leadership of the [USFI's Danish section] SAP agreed with the majority of the Red-Green alliance that it would be OK to vote 'yes' on the budget of a potential left-reformist bourgeois government; in Portugal when comrades from the Left Bloc in parliament voted in favor of the draconian EU 'bailout' for Greece."

While OKDE intends its list as a rebuke to its "comrades," it in fact constitutes an indictment of the fraudulent character of the USFI's "anti-capitalist" pretensions. First of all, the USFI does not consistently oppose the austerity policies dictated by the EU bailout of Greece; its Portuguese section even voted for them in parliament. In social as in foreign policy—where its parties have voted to fund the Afghanistan war and supported the imperialist-backed guerrilla forces in Libya and Syria—the USFI sections are parties of social reaction.

The USFI sections do not participate in bourgeois parliaments and governments from the standpoint of revolutionary socialist opposition to capitalism—to expose the reactionary policies of the capitalist class and prepare the working class politically for revolutionary struggle. Once they have reached high state office, they align their votes on the basic requirements of finance capital.

This is not the result of unconscious errors by the USFI, but the result of the USFI's conscious indifference and hostility to the principles it (at times) claims to represent. In fact, the USFI even publicly proclaims that not only it has betrayed these principles in the past, it is prepared to betray them again.

In a recent book published by the USFI sections regarding their history, titled *New Parties of the Left: Experiences from Europe*, Danish Pabloite leader Bertil Videt writes: "Political parties are of course moving targets, which are difficult to capture and categorize. Any attempt of categorization can quickly become obsolete, and we have no guarantee that an anti-capitalist party will not be tempted by the taste of power and give up on main principles, as did the Italian Communist Refoundation Party, which supported the Italian military intervention in Afghanistan and US bases in Italy." (p. 21)

In fact, the main reason the USFI does not want to categorize itself, and considers political parties to be incomprehensible "moving targets," is because it is hostile to a class analysis of the interests that political parties represent. Above all, it fears what such an analysis would reveal about itself.

Drawn from the same social layers as SYRIZA and the personnel of Europe's main bourgeois parties—which have enriched themselves for decades, by tying proletarian opposition to social austerity to toothless protests dominated by the union bureaucracy—the USFI are not parties of the working class. They are bourgeois parties recruited in layers of

the affluent middle classes, organically committed to bourgeois rule and to pursuing policies objectively hostile to the working class.

This is reflected in the conclusion of OKDE's letter, where it summarizes its concerns and its perspectives for future action.

OKDE begins by expressing its fear of "polarization," writing: "The rise of SYRIZA is the last chance of the national as well as the international system (addressed to the Troika, i.e. especially to the German government, but also to the 'public opinion' of Germany) to save the situation with something akin to 'normal' methods. But one cannot be sure that this exit or escape will work, for various reasons. And then? What happens when SYRIZA fails (or more precisely, during the time when SYRIZA is in the process of failing)?"

What OKDE is raising is the possibility of working class opposition developing to the left of a SYRIZA government that was trying to rule with the "normal," i.e. anti-working class, policies. It fears what would happen if, having been politically tied to SYRIZA by the USFI's policies, it became clear that the working class was also far to the left of the USFI and of OKDE. Who would be in a position to control the struggles of the working class?

OKDE goes on to make quite clear that its role in such a situation would not be uncompromising hostility to SYRIZA, but political support. It aims simply to act as a left cover for SYRIZA, like SYRIZA did for Greece's social-democratic party, PASOK, when PASOK began implementing the EU cuts in 2009.

It writes, "In the future everything may depend on the proper *tactical* behavior of the anti-capitalist-revolutionary forces ... towards SYRIZA (and secondarily towards KKE [the Stalinist Greek Communist Party]). It is obviously not enough to say, 'SYRIZA means reformism, so get rid of it.' ... A prediction about the demise of SYRIZA is hardly the best approach."

This is the cynical argumentation of a politically dishonest layer of careerists and middle-class functionaries deeply hostile to the working class. The policies of SYRIZA—like those of the USFI, as outlined by OKDE itself—are not policies of reform, but of imperialist reaction. The task of the working class and its political vanguard is not to work out the correct tactical alliance with them, but to shatter their political authority and expose them as agents of the class enemy.



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