

Greece: University of Athens students speak to WSWS

Our correspondents
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Students at the main campus of the University of Athens spoke with a *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team.

Yannis works at the university and was asked what he thought of the May 6 election in which no party was able to secure a majority but which recorded a big shift in support for SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left).

He said, “I think people are changing parties. I don’t think there are new people involved in politics, but people have just moved from the old parties and voted for a new party.

“I didn’t vote in the May election. I don’t support any of the parties. I think they are the same politics, just with different parties. If SYRIZA takes control, let us see what they do.

“My parents live in Naxos and they didn’t vote. They live in Athens but are only allowed to vote in Naxos. It is very expensive to get on the ship to Naxos. When they had some money, they could have a nice two days of vacation there, and now they can’t.”

Asked his opinion of SYRIZA and its leader Alexis Tsipras, Yannis said, “I don’t think very much of him. He has some differences with the other parties but I don’t know if these differences are enough to make a difference. He says he is going to vote against the Memorandum [committing Greece to drastic austerity measures] but I don’t really know what he is saying as I have not read it.”

Eva is studying German philology at the university. She said, “I hope SYRIZA win the election because maybe there will be some change. I am afraid that New Democracy might win again. I hope that Golden Dawn [the fascist party] is no longer in parliament.”

Asked what she thought Tsipras would change, she said, “if he belongs to the left, I think he will have a

different approach to the people.”

Maxos is from Uganda and is a theology student. He said, “I cannot vote but I think a lot about the Memorandum and the situation facing Greece. People have lost faith in the politicians. They all say one thing and their actions say a different thing. It’s very important for what is going to happen in the rest of Europe. Greece is an example for Europe. If the Memorandum gets through in Greece, this will be implemented in other countries as well.”

Vehmis, also a theology student said, “I think you are right that this austerity is taking place in every country. I don’t know how the solution will come. I think the way things are going it may come to a revolution.”

Fotini and Anastasia are students at the university who have been studying for two years.

Fotini said, “A lot of people in Greece are not getting paid in many places in the public sector. In the university there are problems because they don’t have enough study materials. We are not working part-time although we would like to. We have friends who have to work as waitresses as they can’t get in the field they studied in.”

Fotini and Anastasia said their parents are both working and they are living with their parents whilst they are studying. They told the team that they know families where parents have lost their jobs.

“A lot of people have chosen to commit suicide because of the problems,” they said.

Asked if she thought young people were becoming radicalised as a result of several years of austerity, Anastasia said, “the people can try to find a solution but the solutions are not just coming from the people.” She said she favoured a coalition government, “not including the extreme left or extreme right and that the new government should represent the will of the

people.” Asked what the will of the people was, she said, “There should not be an economic war against Greece. The reforms taking place are just too extreme for the Greek people to take. Some of these families cannot live anymore.”

Anastasia said she did not consider SYRIZA to be “extreme left”, saying, “I don’t think SYRIZA is extreme and it is putting forward a kind of middle way. I think the debt has to be paid back but not with these strong measures.

“I think the role of a politician is to negotiate the best for the country. We don’t know whether it is the best to be in or out of the euro.”

WSWS reporters explained that society was divided into the financial elite, including the bankers who caused the economic crisis, and the working class who are being forced to pay for it.

Anastasia said, “The country was always divided into two classes, the elite and the masses. It was the elite who created this problem and the masses have to pay for it now. So the best thing we can do now is to at least try to get this Memorandum a bit softer and so not so extreme. You cannot say no to the debt payment as it has already been agreed. We just have to find the best conditions.

“There is a lot of fear among young people about the future. Hope dies last. They see many people have left university and got a degree but now work in low-level jobs.”

Giota and her partner are first year students at the university in pharmaceuticals. She is a member of the New Left Current, which is a faction of the pseudo-left Antarsya coalition (Anti-Capitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow). Asked what she thinks about SYRIZA, she said, “I don’t think there is a solution inside the European Union so that’s why I don’t support Tsipras, because he says there is.

“I think there has to be a solution that comes from the streets, from the universities and from the people themselves.”

Asked why SYRIZA has increased its support, Giota said, “I think it is because of the disillusionment in politics over the last years. People have seen there is no change with PASOK [the social democratic party] and the ND [New Democracy, the conservative party].

“I don’t think there is a deep left consciousness in people voting SYRIZA. They just see it as a hope.

SYRIZA, just in words, puts forward a certain radical outlook so people voted for it.”

The reporting team asked about Antarsya’s programme of leaving the euro and returning to the drachma which, under capitalism, could only result in a massive devaluation of the currency and further drastic cuts. Giota said, “We will have these problems if we stay in the euro zone too.

“There is also quite a big part of SYRIZA that is also for getting out of the euro and the European Union. That is why one of the things that Tsipras did, even before the election, was to talk to Antarsya to see if they could have a front together.”



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