

SYRIZA's Tsipras pledges to save Greek and European capitalism

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The head of SYRIZA, Alexis Tsipras, has chosen a column in the *Financial Times* to pledge that his party will act as the saviour of the euro currency and a tax collector on behalf of the troika.

"I will keep Greece in the euro zone and restore growth," he promises in a June 12 opinion piece.

In this case at least, the medium is indeed the message. The FT is the premier organ of the global financial oligarchy. And it is to this oligarchy that Tsipras speaks. Often it is necessary to tease out the real substance of anything Tsipras says. He heads a party that represents the political interests of the Greek bourgeoisie and a layer of the middle class that feels its existence under threat—both from the demands for savage austerity being made by the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank in the Memorandum agreed by the previous government, and from below in the form of the explosive opposition this has generated in the working class. To bridge this gap, Tsipras usually employs a blanket of leftist rhetoric against austerity to cover his constantly reiterated pledges to save Greek and European capitalism.

But here Tsipras is addressing the speculators, bankers and governments of Germany, France, the UK and the United States. So there is far less ambiguity to his message. There are a couple of ritualistic references to the "humanitarian crisis," but nothing more.

"Lest there be any doubt," he proclaims, "my movement—SYRIZA—is committed to keeping Greece in the euro zone."

A name check for US President Barack Obama follows, solidarising SYRIZA with the call for a "sensible" plan to stabilise "our debt and our deficits".

Tsipras offers himself as the right man for the job of repaying Greece's debts. "SYRIZA is the only political

movement in Greece today that can deliver economic, social and political stability for our country," he writes, which "will benefit the euro zone" and "save the common currency".

Greece's "problems" are attributed not to the criminal speculative activities of the banks and the rapacious demands of its creditors for repayment of these gambling debts, but to "low public revenues." He promises to end the "tax concessions and exemptions granted to special interests by previous administrations, along with a low effective tax rate on personal income as well as capital".

This "pragmatic and socially just fiscal stabilisation" is designed to fix public expenditure "at approximately 44 per cent of GDP" and eliminate the four percent gap in revenues from direct taxation compared with average European levels.

Rather than oppose handing further monies to the bankers, he says that recapitalising Greek banks, "with loans from the troika", will be done "transparently".

For years SYRIZA had a commitment to nationalise the banks as part of its programme. Now it is set on recapitalising them using money from the troika. This makes a lie of its threat not to honour the Memorandum and the savage austerity measures agreed as a precondition for the €110 billion bailout of its banks.

SYRIZA still wants the EU, ECB and IMF to fund the banks, and he who pays the piper always calls the tune. Little wonder that in Greece's major conservative daily, *Kathemerini*, Tsipras adds that his party will not approach Greece's foreign creditors "to pick a fight, but to convince them."

SYRIZA's electoral success rests on its publicly stated opposition to austerity measures. But this is incompatible with its insistence that Greece must remain in the EU and the euro zone. Both are

instruments of the major global corporations, of the banks and the most powerful European imperialist powers. Any agreement signed with the troika, and not just the Memorandum, will be shaped solely by these interested parties and at the expense of the working class.

The actual terms of the “bailout”, of which so far only €45 billion has been released, prove this. As with all such bailouts—for Spain, Portugal and Ireland—this is money that is given over to the banks and paid for by the workers. Fully 40 percent of Greece’s loan from the troika went straight into the pockets of non-Greek financials, 23 percent to Greek financials and 18 percent right back to the ECB itself. And they all continue to get the interest from the loan as well!

SYRIZA has no intention of making a fundamental challenge to this set-up. Its numerous apologists in the fake-left groups, many of which have factions in the coalition, claim that SYRIZA wants to cancel the debt. But this is a lie. Its ten-point programme urges only a “moratorium on debt servicing” and “negotiations for debt cancellation”—of only some of the debt—with “regulation of the remaining debt”.

Its economic measures are not as radical as those that existed in most European countries up until the 1980s. It merely urges “taxation of fortunes over 1 million euros and large-scale revenues,” while not specifying what such a levy might be. It also calls for a “gradual increase, up to 45 percent, of the tax on the distributed profits of corporations”.

In reality, today most companies pay little or no taxes, with the vast majority of state revenues coming from income and consumption taxes.

SYRIZA’s manifesto concludes with the claim, “Our strategic aim is socialism with democracy,” but this has the same character as the promises of the old social democratic and Stalinist parties that never once impinged on their actual pro-capitalist politics.

In the meantime, SYRIZA stands for “the alliance of the People”, which means nothing other than the subordination of the working class to policies framed to meet the strategic interests of the Greek, European and international bourgeoisie.

Tsipras speaks out of both sides of his mouth. In public he rails against the iniquities suffered by the Greek people, while in private meetings he plots with their authors. Should SYRIZA form a government or be

part of a coalition, it would do what is demanded of it by the troika and by Wall Street and the City of London.

The most far-sighted workers and youth must reject the counterfeit leftism of SYRIZA and build a genuinely socialist party to represent their interests.

In or out of the euro and the EU, under capitalism Greek workers face brutal austerity and savage repression. The International Committee of the Fourth International and its European sections call for an industrial and political offensive to establish a workers’ government that will end the dictatorship of Greek big business and of the troika, seize the assets of the banks and the major corporations and implement an emergency programme of public works to provide decent jobs, education, housing and health care for all.

These measures are possible only within the framework of a political mobilisation of workers throughout the continent for the establishment of a United Socialist States of Europe. We pledge ourselves to this fight alongside our Greek brothers and sisters.



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