

SYRIZA backs Greek government's capitulation to the EU

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Just over a month ago, Alexis Tsipras claimed he would declare Greece's memorandum with the European Union (EU) "null and void" and repeal all cuts in social spending if his party won the national election. The party he leads, the Coalition of the Alternative Left (SYRIZA), now fully supports the loan agreements made with the EU and promises the government to act as a responsible opposition.

In a radio interview last Monday, SYRIZA spokesman Panagiotis Skourletis said the majority of his parliamentary faction opposed the Communist Party's (KKE's) draft legislation stipulating the termination of all agreements with the "troika"—the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank.

Skourletis told the *World Socialist Web Site* that SYRIZA was indeed in favour of renegotiating the terms, but that if Greece completely rejected the memorandum, it would also have to forgo the related loan payments from the EU. "We can't support these parts of the bill", he said, although SYRIZA parliamentarians could agree to some of its content.

The loan agreements with the troika include sweeping austerity measures already responsible for widespread misery and poverty in Greece. The loans granted in return for this devastation largely go to the country's creditors, who rake in huge profits thanks to high interest rates.

SYRIZA refuses to oppose this. According to Skourletis, his faction has also submitted a bill that would revoke the minimum wage cut. Given the massive cuts made in recent years, however, this measure alone would not repair the damage done to Greek society, even if it were to be enacted—which SYRIZA has no intention of doing.

In the June 17 parliamentary elections, SYRIZA

received 27 percent of the vote because it had spoken out, at least at campaign events in Greece, against the memorandum. The sixfold increase in its share of votes compared to the 2009 election was mainly due to the fact that young people, especially, harboured hopes that the party would end the austerity measures.

Participating in the official opposition five weeks later, SYRIZA now openly acknowledges its acceptance of the memorandum and its intention to make only cosmetic changes that would facilitate its adoption. Immediately after the election, Tsipras stressed that his party would fulfil the tasks of a "responsible" opposition and not call for strikes and demonstrations.

His current support for the memorandum comes just as the government—the conservative New Democracy, the social-democratic PASOK, and the Democratic Left—announced new social cuts of €11.6 billion, further privatisations of state enterprises, and the implementation of all pending spending cuts, to avoid jeopardising loan payments from the troika.

Tsipras officially rejected these plans, calling government members liars because during the election campaign they said they wanted to renegotiate the memorandum and were now implementing it.

"You cling to the devastating programme and carry on from where [previous prime minister Lukas] Papademos left off", he said, adding: "The government is too weak to renegotiate the loan agreement and has totally capitulated to the troika".

A look at SYRIZA's proposals shows that these are merely empty words. There are no essential differences between SYRIZA's proposals and the government's policies.

SYRIZA cynically opposes the government's privatisation plans with its own concept of

“cooperation”. That is, state electricity plants or public transport facilities should not be completely sold, but operated in “cooperation” with investors.

Dimitrios Papadimoulis, SYRIZA’s economic spokesman, explained his party’s concept as follows: “The state could participate in such cooperation by, for example, making real estate available from the tourism industry. The other side would provide the investment. In this way, both sides would benefit and profit in the long run, without the public sector losing its property”.

In essence, these proposals mean that railway or electricity infrastructure, etc., would not be sold, but leased to private investors. The result for workers and customers would be the same, but the state would assume responsibility for upkeep and maintenance. Furthermore, Papadimoulis does not rule out future privatisations, stressing that currently the market value of the relevant state property is too low to justify such sales.

In the coming weeks, SYRIZA will also provide similar suggestions as to how other such measures can be better enforced. Earlier this month, it appointed a shadow cabinet to deal with this task. Members of the panel have already indicated the areas likely to be targeted.

The group consists of representatives of the former ruling PASOK party, long-serving SYRIZA functionaries, and a number of scientists who are either SYRIZA members or have associated themselves with SYRIZA for many years.

The interior ministry is led by former athlete Sofia Sakorafa, who was a PASOK parliamentarian until 2010 and supported the first rounds of cuts. Another prominent PASOK member is Alexis Mitropoulos, who is responsible in the shadow cabinet for reform of the administration—an area Tsipras singled out for cuts during the election campaign.

The right-wing policies adopted by SYRIZA in the parliamentary opposition demonstrate the bankruptcy of the perspective it advanced during the election campaign. Party representatives declare again and again that the EU institutions can be reformed and the credit agreements overturned.

Even after French President François Hollande—whom Tsipras called a beacon of hope—and German Chancellor Angela Merkel emphatically stated there would be no renegotiation of the memorandum,

and even though a growing number of European politicians have demanded the expulsion of Greece from the euro zone, SYRIZA continues encouraging illusions in the EU.

Yannis Milios, a leading SYRIZA economist, was still saying on July 7 that it was “almost completely out of the question” that Greece would be thrown out of the euro zone. Although he admitted that Europe’s ruling elites want to rid the continent of the welfare state and introduce “Chinese standards”, he said SYRIZA did not want to disrupt the euro zone.

“This is the situation we can base our negotiations on”, he declared.

The policies advanced by SYRIZA since the election show that these views serve to defend the EU institutions and austerity through which the elites seek to impose Chinese standards on the work force.



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