

SYRIZA leader Tsipras offers his services to the troika

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Under conditions of growing popular resistance to austerity, Alexis Tsipras, leader of the largest opposition group, SYRIZA, the Coalition of the Alternative Left, is preparing to succeed the unstable government of Greece in order to control and suppress workers' protests. He made this clear on Friday in an interview with the German weekly *Die Zeit*.

The conservative-social democratic government of Greece is in deep crisis due to the concerted opposition to its policies by broad layers of the population. Last Wednesday, the Greek parliament voted by a narrow margin for the fifth successive European Union (EU) austerity package, but it remains unclear whether the cabinet will be able to implement the pay cuts and layoffs in practice. In response to the crisis, EU representatives have declared that emergency loans to Greece will be withheld until the government takes practical steps to implement their list of dictated redundancies.

In Thessaloniki and other Greek cities, workers are currently occupying the town halls to prevent such lists being sent to Athens. In the capital itself, protests and strikes are taking place on an almost daily basis, although the unions are doing all they can to limit and suppress opposition. Workers have already refused to implement the cuts bound up with previous austerity diktats.

Now, in this highly charged situation for the EU, Tsipras has offered his services to the ruling class of Europe to take over the reins of government and bring the situation under control. In his interview with *Die Zeit*, he insists that his party would prove to be a reliable partner of the EU and effectively enforce the cuts.

“SYRIZA will soon take over the reins of government in Greece”, Tsipras announced, and

explained to the representatives of the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that the strategy of the conservative government Andonis Samaras (New Democracy—ND) was misfiring. Its privatisation programme had failed to yield sufficient funds, and the government was too weak and unstable to implement the decisions made by parliament. “Can a European partner now place their confidence in Samaras to be able to implement this policy?” he asks rhetorically.

SYRIZA is the more reliable and credible partner for the EU and can ensure that creditors get back as much of their money as possible. “We have to sit down at a table and find a solution to ensure that our partners do not have to pay more,” Tsipras said. The solution he proposes is debt relief, a so-called haircut, as was implemented earlier this year for private creditors.

Tsipras refers explicitly to the former head of Deutsche Bank, Josef Ackermann, who had also recently called for a debt restructuring deal for public creditors—i.e., above all for euro zone countries and the European Central Bank (ECB). Ackermann combined his proposal for a partial remission of debt with further austerity measures and new fiscal rules for Greece. This is also the programme of SYRIZA. Tsipras made that clear by referring to Ackermann's remarks as “a proposal in the interest of Europe and Greece”.

During the election campaign five months ago, SYRIZA had declared it would reverse all previous cuts. On this basis, the grouping was able to win 27 percent of the vote in the general election. At the same time, however, Tsipras had indicated that his promises should not be taken too seriously by stressing his determination to keep Greece in the EU and the euro zone.

Now, Tsipras only refers to austerity tangentially in his latest declarations. Instead, he closes ranks with

Ackermann and seeks to demonstrate his organisation's devotion to the EU, its readiness to repay debt and willingness to implement cuts. He slavishly offers the services of SYRIZA to the EU.

In his interview with *Die Zeit*, Tsipras emphasises on a number of occasions that his party had no intention of toppling the government or destabilising the country. SYRIZA is preparing to take over should the Samaras government lose its majority and no longer be able to govern the country.

This is not a minor point. As the largest opposition party, SYRIZA could force new elections at any time by a mass resignation of its deputies. Via such a move, it could have easily and legally prevented the last austerity package. This was never its aim, however. The issue for SYRIZA is how to enforce the cuts in a "reliable" and "credible" manner.

This is made clear in the interview when Tsipras addresses what he purports are the reasons for the debt crisis in Greece. Both "the Greek government" and "the Greek people" bear a "great responsibility", he declares. The "Europeans" were also responsible because they "were blind in the case of Greece"—i.e., by failing to insist on the implementation of previous cuts packages drawn up by the EU and the euro group.

Tsipras does not mention the billions invested in bank bailouts, which have blown huge holes in the budgets not only of Greece but countries throughout Europe. Not a word is devoted to the way in which German companies and banks have profited from the Greek debt crisis.

Instead, Tsipras accuses the "Greek people" and "Europeans"—i.e., the workers, youth, unemployed and pensioners who have suffered most under austerity measures—of being responsible for the debt crisis. It follows logically that they also have to pay for the crisis.

Tsipras's statements in *Die Zeit* are a clear warning to the workers in Greece and across Europe. The verbal opposition of SYRIZA and similar pseudo-left groups to austerity measures is aimed at directing working class opposition into harmless channels and effectively enforcing the cuts.

This is demonstrated by the track record of other organisations with a similar programme. The Italian Communist Refoundation and the German Left Party, both with affiliations to SYRIZA, have supported

brutal social cuts and military interventions at either the national or state level when they took part in government. SYRIZA has also done the same at the local level.

The duplicity of these organisations, which paralyze and disorient workers, creates a breeding ground for extreme right-wing forces, which can then exploit growing anger and desperation for their own purposes.



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