

# The SYRIZA model

Cristoph Dreier  
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The mass impoverishment of the European population—as the ruling class extends the attacks on workers’ social rights carried out in Greece to Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and beyond—is laying bare the class character of all social tendencies.

The working class finds itself under an historic assault by governments of all stripes. In Greece and Spain, over a quarter of the population and over half the youth are unemployed, and across the region millions of people are losing not only their jobs, but also health care and their homes. Social protests and strikes are mounting across Europe as barbaric policies produce social ills unseen for many decades, such as child labor in Italy and the cutting off of cancer treatment in Greece.

As the recent SDS congress of Left Party student association in the German city of Cologne made clear, the “left” of the political establishment is on a collision course with the workers, supporting the proxy war in Syria and social attacks on the workers modeled on those advocated by Greece’s Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA). In Cologne, members of the German and of the French Left Party, of the Quebec student group CLASSE, and of the British Socialist Workers Party listened enthusiastically to reports on SYRIZA, which is preparing itself to rule Greece.

SYRIZA’s limited criticisms of Greece’s discredited social-democratic PASOK party won it support in this year’s election. In the international media, however, SYRIZA cynically reassured the banks that it would pay Greece’s debts and do everything to keep Greece in the euro zone. While he repeatedly held talks with army and police officials, SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras benefited from a storm of media coverage and obtained 27 percent of the vote, finishing second.

The 71 parliamentarians of SYRIZA made possible the latest Greek austerity package by refusing to provoke the dissolution of the parliament. Greek

election law states that fresh elections must be held if at least 60 of the 300 parliamentary deputies and their replacements resign.

SYRIZA is now dumping the few cynical “left” phrases it used during the election, winning the bourgeoisie’s recognition as an indispensable pro-austerity party. Georgios Papanagnou of the UN University in Bruges told the German daily *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* that demonizing SYRIZA is “deeply counterproductive ... Since the elections the SYRIZA leadership has realized that its new-found attractiveness and strength mean it must re-calibrate its rhetoric and party program.”

As a rising pro-austerity party, SYRIZA proved an attractive model for the pseudo-left tendencies from around the world that gathered in Cologne. SDS leader Paula Rauch summed up their viewpoint after one report on SYRIZA: “When one hears such things, one can get truly jealous of Greece.”

Such comments epitomize the outlook of a layer of affluent political operatives that makes up the petty-bourgeois “left” parties represented at the Cologne congress. Far from opposing the horrific crimes finance capital has carried out against the working class in Greece, they enviously look at SYRIZA and hope they will have a chance to promote their careers by carrying out similar crimes against the workers in their own countries.

These events vindicate the International Committee of the Fourth International’s (ICFI) defense of the revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism and its consistent opposition to the petty-bourgeois “left” politics of forces such as SYRIZA and the Left Party. The social attacks waged by the European Union can only be opposed by fighting to mobilize the international working class for a revolutionary struggle against capitalism, aiming to take power and build a workers state carrying out socialist policies.

As the ICFI has insisted, such a struggle can develop only in opposition to forces, like those present at the Cologne congress, who seek to subordinate the working class to the interests of sections of the petty bourgeoisie. Descended from the Stalinist allies of the Kremlin bureaucrats who restored capitalism in the USSR in 1991, or the affluent forces that emerged from the post-1968 student movement, these parties are hostile to a revolution and to the working class.

Over a period of decades, they have developed substantial wealth and material interests, as leading professionals, academics, and parliamentarians, or trade union bureaucrats negotiating social cuts with business leaders and heads of state. Now, they see in SYRIZA's experience a case study of how the destabilization of the political establishment in Europe offers them an opportunity to further integrate themselves into the fleshpots of the capitalist state, by advancing the most reactionary positions.

This applied as much to other parties attending the Cologne congress as to SYRIZA. Left Party leader Katja Kipping called for dropping the party slogan, "Down with Hartz IV" austerity laws, instead preparing a turn to the "ecological milieu." Members of the Left Party's Marx21 or Socialist Alternative (SAV) tendencies—which previously claimed they worked in the Left Party in order to keep it from going into government—openly praised plans to enter into government.

As for SWP leader Alex Callinicos, he spoke in Cologne to praise the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood—who only a few days later began a murderous crackdown on mass working class protests against Islamist President Mohamed Mursi's attempts to seize dictatorial powers.

The accelerating rightward shift of these tendencies is a clear warning to workers in Europe and throughout the world. They will not shrink from the most brutal methods to crush popular opposition and impose social attacks on the working class.

These developments underline the necessity of an unrelenting political struggle against these forces and of mobilizing the working class independently of the existing organizations. For this the working class will find itself compelled to build its own political party, on the independent proletarian perspective represented by the ICFI.



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