

# Greek government extends strikebreaking against subway workers to rail and tram workers

Christoph Dreier  
28 January 2013

After using emergency powers to break a nine-day strike by Athens subway workers, the New Democracy-led coalition government in Greece extended its “civil mobilization” order to 2,500 rail and tram workers. Rail, tram and bus workers struck on Friday to protest the state repression against the subway workers.

Having last Thursday issued a “civil mobilization” order against the subway workers, which drafts those targeted into the military and carries the threat of mass firings, arrests and jail sentences of up to five years, the government deployed hundreds of riot police early Friday to break up an occupation by strikers of a major subway depot in Athens. The subway workers’ union, SELMA, quickly capitulated and called off the strike.

Next, the government, which includes the social democratic PASOK and the supposedly more radical Democratic Left, turned to state repression to halt the sympathy strikes by other transit unions. In addition to the strikebreaking orders against rail and tram workers, a court on Sunday declared the solidarity strike by bus drivers to be illegal.

In calling the sympathy strikes, the trade unions were seeking to contain a wave of spontaneous anger in the working class against the government’s assault on the subway workers and its de facto criminalization of serious strike action or any other form of collective resistance by workers against the austerity policies of the Greek and international bourgeoisie. The subway workers struck against a new round of wage cuts, part of a further attack on public-sector wages ordered by the government last year in compliance with the demands of the “troika”—the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank. Subway workers have already seen their wages

cut by as much as 60 percent over the past three years.

The rail and bus unions are already seeking to limit sympathy strikes to token protests. The rail action is slated to end Monday and the bus drivers’ strike is set to resume for just one day on Tuesday. Both strikes are restricted to only a portion of the workforce.

The unions have no intention of leading a struggle to unite the working class to bring down the government. Their aim is to dissipate and demoralize the mass opposition by channeling it into futile appeals for a change of course by the existing government.

Meanwhile, the pseudo-left SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) is being groomed by the ruling class as a possible alternative to the New Democracy-led coalition in a future election, should that become necessary to head off an independent and revolutionary movement of the working class.

While the government was breaking the subway strike and banning strikes by other transit workers, SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras was in Washington DC meeting with the IMF and the US State Department and telling the Brookings Institution that he represented no danger to the capitalist status quo. (See: “Greek pseudo-left leader Tsipras auditions for IMF, State Department” <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2013/01/26/tsip-j26.html>).

At a press conference in New York, Tsipras issued a two-faced statement on the subway strike, ostensibly criticizing the government while implicitly suggesting that the workers were also to blame. “The last thing our country needs is an escalation of tensions and social conflicts,” he said.

Dimitris Papadimoulis, a SYRIZA parliamentary deputy, addressed the strike in a radio interview. He

criticized the “junta-like” civil mobilization, but hastened to add that his party had played no role in the strike.

He then proceeded to slander the subway workers themselves, claiming they owed their jobs to patronage from the New Democracy and PASOK. He declared that the two parties, which for decades alternated as the government parties, had created “especially in the metro huge numbers of posts distributed on the basis of patronage.” He continued, “They should know that it is those they protected in the past who are becoming radical and turning against them today.”

The two major trade union federations, ADEDY (Civil Servants Confederation) and GSEE (General Confederation of Greek Workers), have verbally condemned the government’s action, but have refused to take any serious action to defend the strikers. Predictably, they have announced yet another symbolic one-day general strike, to take place at the beginning of February.

The only organized protest against government strikebreaking on Saturday was a march of some 2,000 people in Athens’ Syntagma Square called by PAME, the trade union federation linked to the Communist Party. Like all previous protests called by the Stalinist union leaders, it advanced no strategy for a genuine struggle against the government, the Greek ruling class, or the European Union and the international banks for which the EU speaks.



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**