

SYRIZA makes political pact with the nationalist right

Christoph Dreier
4 April 2013

On March 22, the chairman of the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), Alexis Tsipras, met with his counterpart from the right-wing ultra-nationalist party Independent Greeks (ANEL), Panos Kammenos, to lay out a common alliance. Calling itself a “front”, the alliance is committed to saving the Cypriot banks with aid from the European Union (EU) in order to compensate for the losses suffered by the Greek debt restructuring.

The two parties have called on the chief of the Greek National Bank, Giorgos Provopoulos, to explain to parliament why he rejected the request to support Cypriot banks with €2 billion of the €48 billion bailout fund for Greek financial institutions.

In this way, the Cypriot government wanted to prevent the destruction of the banking system of the country by the EU.

The formation of the SYRIZA-ANEL alliance demonstrates the correctness of the assessment of the *World Socialist Web Site* that SYRIZA cannot be considered a left tendency, but is a right-wing, middle-class formation. It is also a clear warning to Greek and European workers that the largest opposition party in Greece is ready to collaborate with the most reactionary forces to advance the interests of the Greek ruling class.

ANEL is a far-right split from the conservative ruling party New Democracy (ND). Kammenos, who sat in parliament since 1993 as an ND deputy, and from 2007 to 2009 was vice-minister of commerce and shipping, founded ANEL in February 2012. He had been expelled from the ND parliamentary group and the party because he did not vote for the second memorandum agreed on with the EU.

Peppered with a few populist phrases against the austerity measures, ANEL advocates a reactionary programme of nationalism and dictatorship. Kammenos

calls for a non-partisan committee that would have emergency powers and control the fate of the country. What was needed was a “national awakening and uprising,” he said. This includes the persecution and deportation of undocumented immigrants, which ANEL vehemently supports and has made an issue of “national security.”

SYRIZA is reacting by entering into the alliance with ANEL, and with its own rightward turn to the new course that the EU and especially Germany have taken towards Cyprus. While in the case of Greece, the EU worked closely with the Greek ruling elite to save the banks at the expense of the working class, in Cyprus, the measures are also aimed at the Cypriot bourgeoisie itself. The German government’s stated aim is to squeeze the country’s banking sector dry and thus to strengthen its position against its rivals.

The Greek bourgeoisie not only fears that the policy on Cyprus might serve as a model for Greece, but is also worried about its immediate impact. Greece is Cyprus’s main trading partner. In 2010, it sent 7.3 percent of its exports to the island, its third largest export market. As well as the island’s central geo-strategic location—in particular in relation to border conflicts with Turkey and the ongoing war in nearby Syria—the huge natural gas reserves off the island are of crucial economic importance.

Since 1964, the Greek government has sought to incorporate Cyprus to Greece. After the Greek military junta tried to annex the Republic of Cyprus in 1974 in a coup, Turkey occupied the north of the island and founded the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which still exists today. In 2004, the Republic of Cyprus was accepted into the EU at Greece’s insistence, despite the contentious border issues. This policy is now under threat from the EU measures

against Cyprus.

SYRIZA's criticisms of EU policy in Cyprus are guided by these considerations. It defends the interests of the ruling elite in Greece, and not those of the Cypriot and Greek workers. In the past, Tsipras has defended the EU and called for Greece to repay its debts to the banks.

SYRIZA is even calling for an extension of this regime to cover Cyprus. While SYRIZA is critical of the EU's Cyprus policy, together with ANEL it is asking to extend the Greek bank bailout to Cyprus.

The European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) is the EU's main instrument for maintaining its brutal austerity measures in Greece, which have caused an unprecedented social catastrophe. The extension of this mechanism to Cyprus means the extension of these brutal social attacks. At the same time, however, such a policy would increase Greek influence in Cyprus.

Last Thursday, in an interview with the Turkish newspaper *Haberturk*, SYRIZA MP Rena Dourou underscored the nationalist position of her party, describing the statements of the Turkish foreign minister that his country would not permit the extraction of natural gas off the island's coast by the Republic of Cyprus, as a "continuing policy of provocation". The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was not entitled to the gas reserves, and Turkey should give up its stance on the island, she said.

In February, SYRIZA had criticised one of its deputies, because he had spoken out against a military conflict with Turkey over other disputed islands. These views were "far from SYRIZA's. They in no way represent the official party line", the party explained at the time.

Such nationalist positions fundamentally concur with those of ANEL, which is why Kammenos made the offer to establish a "front" with SYRIZA, and is why Tsipras agreed. As social inequalities worsen and international conflicts sharpen, SYRIZA defends ever more openly the interests of the Greek bourgeoisie, at home and abroad.

This position stems directly from SYRIZA's class character, as a bourgeois party speaking for wealthy, middle-class layers closely tied to the Greek ruling elite and to the EU, and extremely hostile to the interests of the working class.

The SYRIZA leadership has already announced that it

would also consider working with ANEL following new elections, which could see SYRIZA come to power with a right-wing party and move to directly implement deep attacks on the working class.

This is a clear warning for Greek and European workers. Their fundamental social and democratic interests can only be defended in a tireless struggle against SYRIZA and all its pseudo-left satellites.

The nationalism of these groups must be opposed by the independent perspective of the United Socialist States of Europe. The experiences in Cyprus and Greece have shown that the capitalists have no solution to the crisis, except to destroy the rights of workers and to intensify international conflicts.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact