

The election in Greece and the political tasks of the working class

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The parliamentary elections taking place in Greece on Sunday hold important lessons for the international working class.

After five years of brutal austerity measures dictated by the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the country is at rock bottom economically and socially. The traditional parties are so hated that Syriza, the “Coalition of the Radical Left,” has a major chance of winning the election and taking over the government. But for working people, a Syriza government would not represent a way out of the crisis; on the contrary, it would represent an enormous danger.

Despite its left-wing facade, Syriza is a bourgeois party that rests on affluent layers of the middle class. Its policies are determined by union bureaucrats, academics, professionals and parliamentary functionaries who seek to defend their privileges by preserving the social order. While its leader, Alexis Tsipras, promises the voters a (very small) lessening of the terrible austerity in Greece, he never tires of promising the representatives of the banks and governments abroad that they have “nothing to fear” from a Syriza government.

Syriza expressly acknowledges the foundations of Greek, European and international capitalism: private property; the bourgeois state, including its police and army; the euro; the European Union; and NATO. It offers itself as a party that can protect capitalism and its institutions from the threat of social rebellion.

Syriza’s “socialism” does not go beyond making a few demands that the rich should pay their taxes more consistently and the poor should receive a few pitiful handouts. But even these promises will not be kept should the party enter government.

Tsipras has visited Washington, Berlin, Brussels and numerous other imperialist capitals to assure the ruling

elites of his reliability. In a column in the January 20 edition of the *Financial Times*, Tsipras once again pledged his unconditional support for the European Union, which bears the main responsibility for the social devastation imposed on Greece.

“My party, Syriza, guarantees a new social contract for political stability and economic security,” he assured the readers of this international financial paper. “This is the only way to strengthen the euro zone and make the European project attractive to citizens across the continent.”

He explicitly committed himself to repay Greek debt and comply with the EU’s fiscal criteria: “A Syriza government will respect Greece’s obligation, as a euro zone member, to maintain a balanced budget, and will commit to quantitative targets.”

Against the background of the EU’s economic, social and political crisis, substantial layers of Europe’s ruling elites now regard Tsipras as a possible saviour of European capitalism. He is supported by a “united front” stretching from the pseudo-left organisations of the petty-bourgeoisie to diverse European governments and banks, up to the *Financial Times* and the far-right National Front (FN) in France.

In the French daily *Le Monde*, FN leader Marine Le Pen declares that she would rejoice if the “hard-left” Syriza coalition won the upcoming election in Greece: “We do not agree with their entire programme, but we would welcome their victory,” she writes.

In 1938, when Europe descended into fascism and war, Leon Trotsky wrote: “The ‘Popular Fronts’ on the one hand, fascism on the other, these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.”

The Popular Front served the influential Stalinist and social democratic parties as a mechanism to

subordinate the working class to the bourgeoisie and violently suppress revolutionary movements. In France and Spain, it strangled revolutions and paved the way for fascism.

Today, when the Stalinist and social democratic parties are completely discredited and without mass influence, petty-bourgeois parties like Syriza take on the task of suppressing the resistance of the working class. A Tsipras government would not only be prepared to undertake the dirty work of the EU and the IMF, but also to act violently against the working class, which opposes its pledge to “strengthen the euro zone” and “maintain a balanced budget.”

Tsipras unconditionally acknowledges NATO. In recent years, he has built close links to the police and Greek military, whose hands are still stained with blood from the military dictatorship of 1967-1974.

In 1973, the Allende government in Chile declared that the army was the “people in uniform,” disarming workers who were preparing for a struggle against the military. The consequence was a bloody military coup and the Pinochet dictatorship, which cost the lives of tens of thousands. Similar dangers confront the Greek working class under a Tsipras government.

A Syriza government that attacked the working class under the cover of left-wing phrases would be grist for the mill of Golden Dawn and other fascist organisations, which would seek to channel the disappointment and anger of oppressed social layers in a reactionary direction.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on Greek workers not to give any political support to Syriza. There is no party in this election that represents the interests of the working class.

The pseudo-left petty-bourgeois organizations, which criticise one or other point in Syriza’s programme but nevertheless call for a vote for this party, are playing a criminal role. They disarm the workers and share responsibility for the growing danger.

They foster illusions by stating that Syriza reflects a left-wing turn of the masses and by claiming that it can be pressured by the working class to implement progressive policies. Then they claim that despite such illusions—which they have created themselves—one has to go with the masses and support Syriza. Opponents of such an opportunistic and treacherous policy are denounced as “sectarians.”

What is at stake here are not tactical, but principled issues. Syriza represents the interests of capital. It will not react to the pressure of the working class with concessions, but with ferocious attacks, as such pro-capitalist organisations have always done in periods of crisis.

The situation in Greece—the advanced social and political crisis and the lack of an independent perspective for the working class—underscores the urgency of building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Greece and throughout Europe.

The International Committee is the only political party that fights for the international unity of the working class on the basis of a revolutionary socialist programme. We reject the European Union, just as we reject every form of nationalism.

Our goal is the United Socialist States of Europe—a Europe in which workers’ governments expropriate the banks and corporations, dissolve the secret services and military, and organise production according to social need, not the profit interests of the capitalists.



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