

Syriza wins Greek elections

Alex Lantier
26 January 2015

In a broad electoral repudiation of the policies of the European Union (EU) and the outgoing government of conservative Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) took first place in legislative elections yesterday in Greece.

According to initial projections by the Greek Interior Ministry, Syriza won 36.34 percent of the vote, more than projected and far surpassing Samaras's New Democracy (ND) party's 27.84 percent. Thanks to the 50-seat bonus given to the party with the largest number of votes, Syriza is expected to have 149 seats in parliament compared to ND's 76. This is two short of the 151 needed for an absolute majority in the 300-seat parliament, so it appears Syriza will have to look for partners to form a governmental coalition.

The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party is projected to take third with 6.30 percent of the vote (17 seats), the To Potami (River) party 6.03 percent (16 seats) and the Stalinist Greek Communist Party (KKE) 5.47 percent (15 seats). The social-democratic PASOK got only 4.72 percent (13 seats) and the Independent Greeks, a split-off of ND, 4.68 percent (13 seats).

Voters at the polls denounced EU austerity policies, which have led to economic collapse on a scale unseen in Europe since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. Since 2009, job and budget cuts have thrown millions of Greeks into unemployment, deprived them of health care, cut Greece's economic output by 25 percent and wages even further, and pushed youth unemployment to 60 percent.

The electoral repudiation of the Greek capitalist class's traditional parties of rule, PASOK and ND, reflects mass outrage with austerity dictated by the banks. However, Syriza is a bourgeois party that is committed to the EU, the euro and the defense of capitalism. While it has made a few vague promises about improving Greek life, it has been engaged in intense discussion behind the scenes aimed at reaching

an accommodation with the European banks.

In a victory speech delivered at Athens University, Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras said he would find a "new viable solution" for Greece and Europe. "The troika, that is the past," Tsipras said, referring to the EU, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which together arranged austerity policies with governments in Athens.

However, Tsipras promptly promised to work with Greece's lenders, the most important of which are the agencies making up the "troika." He said that the Greek government would be "ready to negotiate with our lenders a mutually acceptable solution" and would "prove all Cassandras wrong. There will be no conflict with partners."

These comments echoed previous pledges that a Syriza government would "maintain a balanced budget, and will commit to quantitative targets."

Tsipras's main aim is to make some sort of deal with the banks of Europe, including a revision of the terms of the repayment of Greek debt. Indeed, there are sections of the ruling class in the United States and Europe that are concerned that such a revision is necessary in order to ensure that Greek bonds can be repaid.

Officials in Germany, which has led the campaign against any let-up in austerity measures, stressed that there should be no abatement in the attack on Greek workers. Jens Weidmann, the president of the Bundesbank, Germany's powerful central bank, insisted that the Greek government should not "make promises that the country cannot afford."

All discussions over the course of policy are taking place within the framework of defending capitalism in Greece and throughout Europe. At most, Tsipras is hoping for some concession that he can hail as a victory in order to bide time and prepare a further attack on the working class.

The main challenge facing the working class in Greece and internationally is to grasp the full dimensions of the political struggle opening up before it. In a Syriza government, workers face a determined enemy. Even Syriza's own Thessaloniki program, from which it is preparing to beat a hasty retreat in talks with its European "partners," pledged only 2 billion euros in new social spending, whereas the EU has cut over 60 billion euros from Greek budgets since 2009.

In the run-up to the elections, Syriza officials were busy behind the scenes reassuring journalists, economists and politicians that an election victory posed no danger to the banks. European news site *EurActiv* wrote: "Key to Syriza's ascent, party officials say privately, is a calculated effort to moderate the radical leftist rhetoric that prompted *Der Spiegel* to name Tsipras among the most dangerous men in Europe in 2012."

Former Syriza leader Alekos Alavanos stressed that the party would pose no threat to the banks in an interview with the *Financial Times* of London two days ago. "Even Mr Tsipras' predecessor as Syriza chief, Alekos Alavanos, questions whether the party's rhetoric matches its intentions," the FT concluded, citing Alavanos's remark that Syriza "now is a moderate party."

Economist Jean-Marc Daniel reassured France's *20 Minutes* that Syriza would do no long-term harm to the stock portfolios of the affluent and the super-rich. "The stock market does not usually like the beginning of 'left' governments, but it picks up gradually as they abandon their program. What is most striking about Alexis Tsipras, is that he is already diluting his program," Daniel said.

If representatives of finance capital state so openly and with such confidence that Syriza is no threat to them, this is because Syriza has been thoroughly vetted by the banks and intelligence agencies. Since Syriza emerged as a major electoral force in Greece in 2012, Tsipras has met publicly with the Greek army and repeatedly traveled to the major capitals of the euro zone and to Washington—after declaring himself an admirer of President Barack Obama's economic policies.

No solution to the crisis facing the Greek working class can be found within the framework of the pro-capitalist and nationalist program of Syriza. What is

required is the building of an independent political movement of the working class, based on an internationalist and socialist perspective.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact