

Syriza forms coalition government with right-wing Independent Greeks

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It took just hours for the leftist pretensions of Syriza, (the Coalition of the Radical Left) to be exposed following its victory in Sunday's Greek general election.

Syriza won 36.3 percent of the vote, obtaining 2,246,064 votes, but its final tally of 149 seats fell just short of the 151 needed for an absolute majority in the 300-strong parliament.

On Monday morning, Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras held talks lasting barely an hour with Panos Kammenos, leader of the right-wing, anti-immigrant Independent Greeks (ANEL). Following the talks, Kammenos announced that the Greek government would be a Syriza-Independent Greeks coalition.

Tsipras, seeking to widen support for the coalition, held talks with To Potami leader Stavros Theodorakis on Monday evening. While Theodorakis previously ruled out sitting in a Syriza-led cabinet, he stressed Monday the need for a "patriotic action plan."

The alliance with ANEL underscores Syriza's character as a bourgeois party, based on privileged layers of the petty bourgeoisie, which articulates the interests of sections of the Greek capitalist class and international capital.

The Syriza-ANEL government is the fulfilment of the "new patriotic alliance" that Tsipras pledged at his final election rally last week. It is just as committed to the defence of capitalism and its international institutions, including the European Union and NATO, as the discredited conservative New Democracy-led government it has replaced. ANEL arose from a right-wing split-off from New Democracy (ND) in February 2012. It polled just 4.68 percent (13 seats) in the election.

Commenting on Syriza's programme just days before the election, the *Financial Times* said the party in

government would initially carry out "cost-free, or relatively inexpensive, gesture politics" such as reinstating 595 cleaners fired by the last government. Behind such token gestures, however, the real task of the Syriza government will be to prepare the political and social basis for an even greater onslaught against the working class.

Syriza's coalition with ANEL was prepared well in advance. In March 2013, Syriza entered into a "front" with ANEL based on efforts to save the Cypriot banks with aid from the European Union (EU).

Following Monday's talks, the *Protothema* newspaper reported that "Syriza and ANEL have already reached an agreement on the issue of the Greek president and ANEL's red lines on national issues will be respected by its leftist coalition partner."

ANEL's "red lines" are of a thoroughly reactionary character. Like the National Front in France and similar ultra-right formations, its complaint over EU-dictated austerity is that it has undermined Greek capitalism. Its nationalist and racist policies include demands for the persecution and deportation of undocumented immigrants, under the guise of "national security."

Syriza's victory is by no means the popular endorsement claimed by the media and its various pseudo-left apologists. Nearly 40 percent of the electorate did not vote, with turnout at just 63 percent (6.3 million out of an electorate of 9.9 million).

This is extraordinarily low, given the blanket media coverage of the election and its presentation as the most important in Greece's modern history. The turnout was lower than in the May 2012 election (65.1 percent), when Syriza made its first electoral breakthrough.

Tsipras's party is the undeserving beneficiary of widespread hostility to New Democracy and especially the social democratic PASOK, which have ruled

Greece since the fall of the 1967-1974 military junta.

PASOK was virtually wiped out, managing to win just 13 seats, with 4.7 percent of the vote, only just passing the 3 percent needed for parliamentary representation. Most of Syriza's support came from layers previously supporting PASOK.

ND finished second with 76 seats, having obtained 27.8 percent of the vote. It will form the parliamentary opposition. The fascist Golden Dawn won 6.3 percent of the vote, securing 17 seats and finishing third. The newly formed populist To Potami (The River) come in fourth, with 6.1 percent of the vote and 17 seats. The Stalinist Communist Party of Greece gained 15 seats, winning 5.5 percent of the vote.

Syriza's programme has been developed in close collaboration with sections of the ruling elite who disagree with economic policies based solely on austerity, as advocated by Germany under Chancellor Angela Merkel. In the Thessaloniki Programme that Syriza put forward for the election, the party stressed that, as opposed to the ND government's perspective of building an alliance only "with the German government," Syriza was "ready to negotiate, and we are working towards building the broadest possible alliances in Europe."

German government officials have ruled out any easing of the terms of the debt repayment program imposed on Greece by the so-called "troika" (the European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank). Following the announcement of the election result, Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said, "We believe Greece has accepted terms that are not off the table after the election day." German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble said, "There are rules, there are agreements. Whoever understands these things knows the numbers, knows the situation."

A European Central Bank (ECB) official cited in the *Wall Street Journal* said, "Mr. Tsipras must pay. Those are the rules of the game. There is no room for unilateral behavior in Europe. That doesn't rule out a rescheduling of the debt."

Those comments were backed up by ECB executive board member Benoît Coeuré, who told a French radio station, "If he [Tsipras] doesn't pay, it's a default and it's a violation of the European rules."

But Syriza's support for the European Central

Bank's quantitative easing policy and its demands for selective debt restructuring have been endorsed by the *Financial Times* and other representatives of capital.

The White House issued a press release stating that "we look forward to working closely" with the new government. After first dropping on news of the Greek election result, the euro climbed for the first time in three days against the dollar following the announcement of the Syriza-ANEL government. The FTSE 100 stock index finished up 19.57 points, or 0.29 percent.



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