

Syriza's electoral success and the pseudo-left

Peter Schwarz
28 January 2015

The new Greek government of Alexis Tsipras has unleashed a wave of enthusiasm within the numerous pseudo-left organisations inside or in the orbit of Syriza and its international sister organisations. They are gushing about a “sea change in European politics” and the “new possibilities for revolutionary socialists.”

A statement by the French New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) reads: “The election victory of Syriza is excellent news. It fills everyone with hope who is fighting against austerity in Europe.”

The executive committee of Germany’s Left Party announced in a press statement: “The election in Greece is not just a turning point for Greece but for all Europe. It opens up opportunities for a democratic renewal and a fundamental change of direction of the European Union.”

Their enthusiasm is not even damped by the fact that Syriza has entered into a coalition with the far-right Independent Greeks of Panos Kammenos, or that its electoral success has been welcomed by right-wing parties such as France’s Front National, Italy’s Northern League, and the UK Independence Party.

The newspaper *Junge Welt*, close to the German Left Party, justifies this “rather strange” alliance with the argument that the xenophobic and chauvinist views of the Independent Greeks are of “secondary importance for the mass of the people who put their cross on the ballot for the left-wing party Syriza.”

“The millions affected by the austerity measures are more concerned about an improvement in their social situation,” *Junge Welt* declares. “And here, the ideas of Tsipras and Kammenos largely coincide.”

Even if one accepted for a moment the claim that Syriza voters are totally indifferent to the aggressive chauvinism of the Independent Greeks—which throws a revealing light on the party and its supporters—the coalition with them is not meaningless. Kammenos has close relations with the country’s pillars of

reaction—the oligarchs among the shipping magnates, the Orthodox Church and the military. The Independent Greeks are a “party of the Right, one that is particularly concerned to protect the ‘hard core’ of the state apparatus,” as Syriza executive member Stathis Kouvelakis admits.

The alliance of Syriza with the Independent Greeks has not only the task of providing Tsipras with the necessary parliamentary majority, it also serves as a link to the hard core of the state apparatus, the notorious right-wing forces in the police and army. Tsipras would not hesitate to deploy these against the working class, should workers mount social protests and rebellions against his government.

At the same time, the alliance with an ultranationalist party reveals the class basis of Syriza’s opposition to the “austerity policies” of Berlin and Brussels.

Syriza does not represent the interests of the working class, which is under attack by the financial elites and their political representatives not only in Greece, but throughout Europe, including in Germany. It speaks for sections of the Greek and European bourgeoisie, who feel side-lined by Berlin and advocate a different capitalist financial policy that more strongly corresponds with their interests.

All Tsipras’s speeches follow this line. He speaks as a representative of the bourgeoisie. He appeals not to the class consciousness of the workers, but to national unity and Greek dignity. He is trying to win support in Paris and Rome for an alliance against Berlin, and is not bothered by the fact that the governments in these countries are mounting massive attacks on their own working class.

In a conversation with the Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero*, Tsipras sang the praises of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, who is hated for his anti-working class policies. “I’m like Renzi”, he said. “I want to change Europe. We will meet very soon because we have a lot

to talk about. We think in the same way about the necessity for growth and about abandoning Germany's harsh policies that are damaging all citizens in Europe."

While Renzi has not yet returned Tsipras's declarations of love, French President François Hollande has invited him to the Elysée Palace. In an official statement, the French Socialist Party welcomed the "victory of the left forces in Greece", and said this strengthened their own course "against austerity."

From the right-wing Front National to the governing Socialist Party, the Left Party and the NPA on the left, practically all political parties in France, which is itself under the pressure of its economically stronger German neighbour, have welcomed Tsipras's election victory.

The logic of this policy is disastrous. It will intensify national conflicts in Europe, subordinate the working class to the national interests of the ruling elites, and in the final analysis lead to war. It is the opposite of a socialist policy, which strives to unite the working class in Europe and internationally in a struggle against capitalism.

Although Tsipras displays his right-wing politics ever more openly, the pseudo-left groups are trying to cover this up. While they cannot avoid criticizing some of his more right-wing excesses, they desperately produce arguments to justify their continued support for Tsipras and Syriza, and to disorient the working class.

One of their arguments is that the Tsipras government, if put under pressure, will pursue a policy in the interests of the workers.

It is in this vein that the Socialist Alternative (SAV), which is active within the German Left Party and had called for the election of Syriza, writes, "The election result will give courage to workers, the unemployed and young people in Greece to take to the streets and to fight. This is central, because from the first day of his government, Tsipras must be put under pressure."

The SAV implies that the Tsipras government would bow to this pressure. But all the international experiences of the last 170 years prove the opposite. Under the pressure of the working class, the bourgeoisie—and Syriza is a bourgeois party—goes not to the left, but to the right.

In 1848, the democratic revolutions in Europe were betrayed by their bourgeois and democratic leaders, after the working class rose up in Paris in June as an independent revolutionary force. Frightened by this

new social force, which threatened their property and privileges, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaders preferred to reconcile themselves with feudal reaction throughout Europe.

This experience, carefully analysed by Marx and Engels, played a decisive role in developing the strategy of the Marxist movement, at the centre of which is the political independence of the working class.

Since then, this pattern has been repeated innumerable times under the most varied historical and social circumstances—in Russia in 1917, when the Kerensky government collaborated closely with the reactionary military before being overthrown in the October Revolution; in 1927 in China, where Chiang Kai-shek led a massacre of his allies in the Communist Party; in the 1930s in Spain, where the Popular Front paralysed the working class and enabled Franco's victory; or in 1973 in Chile, where Allende disarmed the working class in the face of the military.

Another of their arguments is that one must support Syriza, so that the working class can go through these experiences and learn from them. This is pure cynicism. Given the enormous dangers posed by a Syriza government, the task of a Marxist party is to expose the class interests represented by Syriza, to warn the working class against its consequences and provide it with a clear socialist orientation.

This is how the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International participate in the "experiences" in Greece. The numerous pseudo-left groups cling to Syriza because they represent the same class interests as this party. They speak for better-off layers of the middle class, who fear an independent movement of the working class, and who are concerned to ensure their own social elevation within the bourgeois order.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact