

# Syriza capitulates to the European Union

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After just ten days in office, the new Greek government's leftist pretensions are collapsing like a house of cards.

Syriza has dropped its demand for a write-off of Greek debt and watered down its social program. Instead, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis are traveling across Europe to assure governments and banks that they can rely on Syriza, in Varoufakis' words, to "push through the deep reforms of the Greek state that governments before us refused to do."

Insofar as Syriza has a plan, it is to exploit rivalries between various European capitals to renegotiate the repayment of Greece's debts. Tsipras and Varoufakis accordingly spent their first days in office courting the French and Italians, who demand looser credit and more financial room to maneuver from Berlin while imposing their own austerity measures at home.

In the event, Paris and Rome are insisting that Syriza repay Greece's debts, fearing that concessions to the new Greek government could legitimize opposition in the working class, including in France and Italy, and destabilize the entire European Union (EU).

Syriza's hopes in the European Central Bank were also disappointed. No sooner had Varoufakis visited ECB head Mario Draghi in Frankfurt than the central bank decided to no longer accept Greek government bonds as collateral for loans to Greece's banks. If the ECB maintains this policy, the Greek banks and government will be bankrupt by the end of the month.

Varoufakis' subsequent visit to Berlin to meet with German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble was a public humiliation. Syriza's election campaign blamed austerity measures demanded by Germany for the misery in Greece, but Varoufakis said at a joint press conference with Schäuble that Berlin bore no responsibility and Greece alone was to blame for the crisis.

These developments can surprise only those who do not understand or deliberately close their eyes to the class character of Syriza and similar parties internationally. They highlight the gulf separating Syriza from those who voted for it to end austerity and the dictates of the EU.

They vindicate the *World Socialist Web Site's* opposition to Syriza and its pro-capitalist politics, and underscore the correctness of the struggle of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) for socialism and the political independence of the working class against forces such as Syriza.

Before Syriza took power, the WSWs warned: "In its origin, social composition, and politics, Syriza is a bourgeois party—one of many, including the Democrats under US President Barack Obama, that come to power making promises of 'hope' and 'change' and then impose policies of austerity and war."

Emerging from the euro-communist wing of the Communist Party and various petty-bourgeois ex-radical groups, Syriza speaks for affluent layers of the middle class envious of the vast concentration of wealth at the very top of society. This is an international phenomenon. In Greece, 600 multi-millionaires control the economy.

Syriza does not aim to overthrow capitalism and its institutions, including the EU, and replace them with a socialist society. It aims to reform the EU so as to provide access for the middle class layers it represents to the privileges that come with holding state office, and to redistribute the wealth within the top 10 percent of capitalist society somewhat more equitably. To the demands of the working class, the large majority of society, it will react with the same hostility as the previous government.

This is the significance of its coalition with the ultra-nationalist Independent Greeks (ANEL), a rightwing split-off from the former ruling party, New Democracy.

Syriza's decision to form a coalition with ANEL is a concession to xenophobia and chauvinism.

Moreover, the appointment of ANEL leader Panos Kammenos as defense minister is a signal to the army and police, whose history of bloody suppression of working class opposition includes the Greek Civil War and the 1967-1974 colonels' junta, that their power will not be touched.

The events in Greece underscore the unbridgeable gulf between the ICFI and the numerous pseudo-left tendencies. The ICFI, which publishes the WSWs, was alone in warning against the role of Syriza and fighting for an independent, socialist perspective for the working class.

This week, Alex Callinicos of the British Socialist Workers Party gushed: "Revolutionary socialists should celebrate the new government's victory and support the progressive measures it takes."

The Pabloite United Secretariat's web site, *International Viewpoint*, issued a statement, "With the Greek people, for a change in Europe," signed by François Sabado of the French New Anti-capitalist Party, Michael Aggelidis of the German Left Party, Michael Voss of the Danish Red-Green United List, ex-members of Italy's Rifondazione Comunista Gigi Malbarba and Franco Turigliatto, and British film director Ken Loach.

The statement hails the Greek election as a "turning point" and glorifies Syriza as "a political force that has been in contact with the struggles taking place on the streets and that is ready to bring political change to the institutions."

These people will not learn because they represent the same social layers and anti-working class orientation as Syriza. They have spent decades reinterpreting Marxism to adapt it to the interests of the upper-middle class, based on the polemics of the Frankfurt School, existentialism, and other idealist and anti-Marxist currents. Instead of the class struggle, they advocate various forms of protest and identity politics and, in countries like Libya and Syria, support imperialist wars that are marketed as "humanitarian" interventions.

The building of sections of the ICFI across Europe, advancing a political alternative for the working class to the bankrupt, pro-capitalist politics of Syriza, is a matter of urgency. It requires a systematic fight for the historical legacy of Marxism and, in particular, the

struggle led by Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International in opposition to Stalinism and social democracy, and against the paralyzing and disorienting influence of pseudo-left tendencies.

Everywhere, workers are entering into irreconcilable conflict with the ruling class and its political defenders. The experience of a Syriza government will pose enormous dangers as well as opportunities for the working class.

The disappointment and confusion resulting from Syriza's pro-capitalist policies threaten to bring bitter defeats for the working class, paving the way for war and fascism, exemplified by the rise of Greece's pro-Nazi Golden Dawn party. At the same time, the objective conditions for socialist revolution are maturing.

The burning question that must be resolved is the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The ICFI fights for workers and youth to draw the political lessons of the bankruptcy of Syriza, laying the basis for the emergence of a politically conscious revolutionary movement of the working class in Greece and internationally for socialism.



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