

Letter from Greece

A comment on Syriza's “back-flips” over austerity

24 February 2015

The following letter was sent to the World Socialist Web Site from a reader in Greece in response to the perspective, “The capitulation of Syriza and the lessons for the working class.”

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The article finds me in total and complete agreement. Syriza has broken the world record in political *kolotoumbes*, or “back-flips”, as we say in Greek. Tsipras’s new government has not cancelled austerity but rather has just agreed to honour Greece’s financial obligations. The troika is still here, though it has been renamed “institutions”, the Memorandum is now called “Agreement”, and the Lenders have been re-baptized “Partners”. This is the essence of the Syriza “revolution”.

The mood in Athens among real radicals is that Tsipras will capitulate on many more issues—just as the *Wall Street Journal* suggested. We also know well that “eclectic Marxist” Yannis Varoufakis, Greece’s new Minister of Finance, is not against privatizations. If he were, what was the Chinese 18th fleet doing in the port of Piraeus a few days ago, if not to celebrate the continued presence at the “gateway to Europe” (the port of Piraeus) of COSCO, the Chinese shipping giant China Ocean Shipping Group, and the privatization of this Mediterranean logistics hub?

Many people here are predicting that the Syriza government will fall within six months, if not sooner. These are the true deserts of pseudo-leftists who were spawned ideologically by Ernest Mandel and other armchair “revolutionaries” in the 1960s with their focus on race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation rather than the nuts and bolts of class struggle.

We shall soon see this government of the “radical left”, as it calls itself, using the full force of the

bourgeois state to stifle the working class. The fact that Syriza has no trade unionist wing will make its task much easier.

In the first few weeks following its electoral victory on January 25, Syntagma Square and the main squares in other cities around the country were inundated with supporters and well wishers. The other day, however, when Tsipras caved in on all points in his “negotiations” with the troika, very few people showed up. You can’t fool the people all the time.

Many are speaking of the humiliating defeat of the Greek side, and point to the fact that Syriza has just signed its political suicide. They argue that the decoupling of Syriza from its pre-election anti-Memorandum rhetoric and social-democratic slogans will probably lead radicalized layers in Greek society to seek other political carriers to represent them.

In seeking to explain Syriza’s quick back-flip, most leftists here point to the very nature of the party and to the fact that Greece found itself at the center of the new cold war, and that it received tremendous pressure from the United States to surrender its positions. Others say Syriza was bluffing during its negotiations with the troika, but that Tsipras was never prepared to take the country out of the EU-eurozone.

Greece’s young prime minister never realized that had he gone forward and exited these capitalist clubs, he would have had the vast majority of the country’s population on his side. Tsipras should have told the usurers to buzz off, and put on military fatigues and prepare for war. But now it is too late ... for Syriza at least. Tsipras had said that he wanted to punish the “collaborators” and the large capitalists who have bled the Greek people white. He could have done this if he had left the EU-eurozone, but what can he do now that

he's agreed to their demands?

Many to the left of Syriza have new slogans now: "Heads high! Everyone in the streets! We continue against the new government of the Memorandum and submission to the EU and the bosses! The EU is the slaughterhouse of popular rights and needs. It cannot be changed or reformed. It must be smashed!"

Perhaps the most telling commentary has come from the lips of old man Manolis Glezos, a Syriza representative in Brussels. Glezos is a symbol of Greek resistance because together with Apostolos Santas (who has since passed away), he climbed up the Acropolis on May 30, 1941, and tore down the swastika that the *Wehrmacht* had raised when the Nazis entered Athens, on April 27, 1941. In a terse video interview, Glezos said that words can be changed but that you can't change the vote of the Greek people on January 25, 2015. People voted for what Syriza had promised: an end to austerity, which is the aim of the German and Greek oligarchy. They voted for this Syriza promise: "On the day after the elections we will do away with all the austerity laws, the Troika and its consequences." Glezos said, poignantly, "a month has passed and nothing has materialized. I personally ask the Greek people to forgive me because I also contributed to the illusion that Syriza would keep its promises." The old man then called on all forces within Syriza "to hold extraordinary meetings and decide whether to accept this situation."

The response to Glezos' soul-searching has been tough. While some are congratulating him on his candor, most are calling him to put his money where his mouth is, and leave Syriza immediately.

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