

German Left Party votes for austerity measures in Greece

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The Left Party fraction of the German parliament—along with the Greens and the representatives of the parties in the government—will vote Friday on the so-called “stability aid” for Greece. A test vote was held on Tuesday, in which 29 Left Party members of parliament voted “yes,” four voted “no,” and 13 abstained.

Previously, the Left Party had always voted against “aid programs” for Greece. They had based this decision on the fact that the austerity measures demanded in exchange for the bailout packages had worsened the social and economic crisis in Greece, and that the Troika overseeing the programs lacks any democratic legitimacy.

This is also true of the extension of the “aid program” by four months, which is the subject of Friday’s parliamentary vote. In the list of austerity measures it sent to Brussels, the new government of Alexis Tsipras committed itself to “carrying out numerous earlier demands, which the previous governments had continued to reject,” the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported.

As before, the loans will not be extended until the experts of the “institutions”—as the Troika of the EU Commission, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank is now called—have confirmed that all the austerity measures demanded by the EU have been implemented.

Only one thing has changed: neither the conservative New Democracy (ND) nor the social democratic PASOK now rules Greece, but rather Syriza, the Greek affiliates of the Left Party.

By voting in favor of prolonging the credit program, the Left Party is not only legitimizing the Troika and supporting the attacks on the Greek working class. It also signals its readiness to take on the same task in Germany. The very fact that all parties in parliament

agree on such an important question and that there is no—even nominal—opposition, is a clear signal that the established parties are responding to the growth of social tensions by uniting around a policy of attacks on the working class.

Leading representatives of the Left Party went out of their way to justify the capitulation of the Tsipras government, which broke all its campaign promises in less than four weeks.

The fraction president, Gregor Gysi, explicitly welcomed the Greek list of austerity measures, adopted in close coordination with euro group president, Jeroen Dijsselbloem and German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble.

In a press release, Gysi said that the “reform program submitted by Greece” shows “the first way out of the logic of cuts and impoverishment of the previous austerity programs.” Gysi claimed “the most devastating social and humanitarian ramifications are being corrected,” though he knows very well that this is not true.

Gysi placed a lot of weight on the idea that only the politics of the new Greek government and its European partner parties can guarantee “that these countries will be in position to pay back their debts at all.”

Left Party member of the European parliament Fabio De Masi emphasized that Syriza’s capitulation will relieve the German treasury. “In the case of an uncontrolled exit by Greece, the money of the German taxpayers would be gone,” he wrote in a press release. He praised the Tsipras government as the “first government in Athens interested in sustainable state finances.”

The federal manager of the Left Party Matthias Höhn explained that Europe could “already thank the new Greek government.” He said he was sure that the

debates and decisions of the past few weeks would change European politics.

The deputy chair of the Left Party fraction in parliament, Sahra Wagenknecht, wrote on the web site of the Left Party fraction, “Syriza has achieved great successes in the past few weeks.”

She admitted that the new government would first have to sacrifice “a few campaign promises” and could “not provide any money for the implementation of its program.” Nevertheless, “the struggles against the European policies of cuts and privatizations” were “not lost with the extension of the credit program, but have only just begun!”

Like De Masi, Wagenknecht argued in favor of Syriza’s policies by referring to “German tax money.” She claimed that a departure of Greece from the euro zone and the return to a weaker Greek national currency, the drachma, would have serious repercussions

“Then we can receive back all the €60 billion of tax payers’ money, which Germany invested there, in the form of drachmas—then the money is practically all gone. We would have senselessly pulverized all the tax money,” she told the television station Phoenix.

It would be naïve and dangerous to believe that the Left Party is merely trying to make the best of a bad situation and downplay the capitulation of its Greek sister party. In reality, the Left Party is just as determined as Syriza to defend the national and European institutions of capitalism, including the European Union and the euro.

It does not represent the interests of the working class, but wealthier layers of the middle class and sections of the former bureaucracy of the DDR who did not receive their perceived fair share of the spoils when Germany was reunified and who are now demanding access to the fleshpots and privileges of power.

In several state governments in Germany, the Left Party and its predecessor, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), have already demonstrated what they are capable of doing. The PDS and Left Party, which led the Berlin senate together with the SPD between 2002 and 2011, played a pioneering role in cutting jobs and wages in the public sector and cutting spending in education and social programs.

With its defense and justification of the capitulation of Syriza, the Left Party is demonstrating its readiness

to carry out a similar task at the federal level.



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