

Syriza's surrender to the banks exposes France's New Anti-capitalist Party

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On March 2, the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and its international affiliates in the Pabloite United Secretariat (USec) published a statement hailing the Syriza government in Greece. It said the statement had been adopted “by the International Committee of the Fourth International meeting in Amsterdam on 24 February 2015.”

The attribution of this statement to the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which is well known for publishing the *World Socialist Web Site*, is a political provocation. Its goal is to discredit Trotskyism by associating the ICFI with the reactionary politics of the NPA and the attacks on the working class now being prepared by Syriza in Greece.

The warning made by the WSWs last year, when the USec published a statement in the ICFI's name endorsing the CIA-backed, fascist-led putsch in Ukraine, must be repeated: only statements posted on the WSWs speak for the ICFI.

In its latest statement, titled “Solidarity with the Greek people,” the USec advances positions fundamentally opposed to the Trotskyist principles and political line of the ICFI. It hails the election of Syriza as “a frontal challenge to the European ruling classes.” Without saying a word about the austerity measures Syriza has publicly endorsed as part of its agreement with the European Union (EU), it asks “Greek social and political forces themselves in the framework of a very broad and democratic discussion to choose the methods that seem most appropriate” to deal with the EU.

These positions have nothing to do with the ICFI, which has consistently opposed Syriza, warning that it is a bourgeois party and that its coming to power is not a step forward for the working class. The ICFI and the WSWs have insisted that the only viable perspective for workers in Europe is an international revolutionary struggle for the United Socialist States of Europe, a Trotskyist position that the NPA explicitly rejected at its founding congress in 2009.

The political differences between the USec and the ICFI have been thoroughly documented and are a matter of historical record. The ICFI was formed 62 years ago in 1953 in a split with forces loyal to the revisionist International Secretariat led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, which reorganized themselves as the United Secretariat in 1963. The positions that it adopts now—including in Ukraine, where it supported the US-backed coup; in France, with the formation of the NPA; and in Greece, with its backing of Syriza—is a culmination of the liquidationist and anti-Marxist positions it took when it broke from Trotskyism more than a half century ago.

The coming to power of Syriza—the first time a pseudo-left party has formed a government and ruled in its own name—has provided yet another devastating exposure of the Pabloites' reactionary role. Having worked for decades to build bourgeois parties such as Syriza and the NPA itself, which they termed “broad left parties,” they are now tacitly endorsing the Syriza government's austerity measures against the working class.

It took just weeks for the Stalinist, Maoist, Green and pseudo-left

factions inside Syriza to carry out a disgusting repudiation of the party's election pledges to end austerity.

After winning the national election held on January 25, Syriza officials began touring the major capitals of Europe. They made no appeals to the mass opposition to austerity in the European working class. Instead, on February 20, they signed a deal recognizing the EU austerity program, abandoning demands for a write-down of Greek debt, and agreeing to negotiate with the “troika” (the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund), cynically renamed “the institutions.”

On the morning of February 24, as the USec met in Amsterdam to endorse Syriza, headlines across Europe were dominated by Syriza's proposals to the EU for new budget cuts, privatizations, health care reductions and increases in the effective retirement age. The USec responded by pledging its solidarity with Syriza and insisting that Syriza and its allies should be given a free hand to impose the EU austerity program on the Greek working class.

The USec's embrace of Syriza's anti-worker policies is not a mistake or tactical error. It flows organically from the NPA's ever more explicit rejection of Trotskyism and socialist revolution, and the hostility of the USec's petty-bourgeois operatives to the working class.

Before the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) launched the NPA, leading LCR member François Sabado wrote in 2008 that as a “broad left party,” the NPA would be “a party that does not incorporate the entire history of Trotskyism and ... is not reduced to the unity of revolutionaries.” The NPA, Sabado explained, “has a history, a continuity: that of class struggles, the best of the socialist, communist, libertarian and revolutionary Marxist traditions.”

While protesting that it was defending pluralism and inclusiveness, the LCR/NPA was seeking to build closer ties to anti-Marxist libertarians and social democratic and Stalinist forces with decades of experience imposing austerity measures in capitalist governments. The NPA denounced criticism of the building of “broad left parties” as a sectarian refusal to negotiate with useful allies.

The WSWs stressed that the LCR/NPA's orientation was bound up with a reorganization of the pseudo-left milieu in the interests of the banks. We wrote: “To be part of the bourgeoisie's realignment of the left, the LCR must make clear they are breaking whatever tenuous association they had with revolutionary politics. To the extent that the LCR is publicly identified with Trotskyism, this is an obstacle to the sharp swing to the right that the LCR anticipates it will carry out ...

“The LCR's real target in liquidating itself is, in fact, Trotsky's political heritage: an insistence on the complete political independence of the working class, revolutionary internationalism, and an irreconcilable opposition to collaboration with the bourgeois state, the Stalinist and social democratic bureaucracies, and all brands of bourgeois nationalism and petty-bourgeois radicalism.”

As the discrediting of Europe's social democratic parties accelerated

amid the deepening social crisis in Europe following the 2008 financial crash, the Pabloites ever more openly developed the conception that their task was to replace Europe's reactionary social democratic parties. This perspective was laid out in a 2011 book containing a collection of essays by leading USec members, *New Parties of the Left*.

The book's cover declares, "Social democratic parties, including the Labor Party in Britain, have shifted to the right across the continent and have fully embraced neo-liberalism. This has opened up a political space to the left of the social democracy which the radical left and revolutionary Marxists have a duty to fill. What is needed are broad pluralist parties of the left to restore independent working class representation."

The Pabloites were clear, however, that the social democratic parties should not be replaced with revolutionary parties. Rather, the social democrats' nakedly free market rhetoric allowed "broad left parties" to posture as being to the left of the social democrats, employing social democratic rhetoric to encourage illusions in the possibility of obtaining left policies from a capitalist government. The overarching goal of this reactionary fraud, which has now found its highest expression in the election of Syriza, was to block a revolutionary struggle by the working class.

Alain Krivine, the NPA's ostensibly semi-retired leader, contributed an essay to *New Parties of the Left* in which he declared that the NPA "does not resolve some issues, it leaves them open for future conferences, for example, all the strategic debates about taking power, transitional demands, dual power, etc. It does not claim to be Trotskyist, as such, but considers Trotskyism to be one of the contributors, among others, to the revolutionary movement. Unwilling, as we had to do under Stalinism, to arrive at policy by the rear view mirror, the NPA has no position on what was the Soviet Union, Stalinism, etc."

An examination of this comment sheds some light on how figures such as Krivine evolved from Pabloite student radicals in the 1960s into consciously counterrevolutionary pillars of European capitalist politics today.

The LCR never operated "under Stalinism," as Krivine claimed, as there was never a Stalinist-led national government in France. The Pabloites nevertheless constantly felt someone was looking over their shoulder and that they had "to arrive at policy by the rear view mirror." Since the October Revolution and the USSR had enormous prestige in the working class in 20th century France, petty-bourgeois students adopted a few Trotskyist phrases, emptied of their content, to posture as left and somehow connected to great revolutionary struggles.

As decades passed after the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR in 1991, however, the LCR no longer felt an obligation to posture as Trotskyist. Not only did such posturing cut across attempts to maneuver with other factions in French bourgeois politics, but it also did not reflect the concerns of the LCR's social base of well-paid academics, parliamentarians and union functionaries. Having acquired wealth, privileges and status within capitalist society, based on unrelenting attacks on workers' living standards, they were hostile to socialist revolution.

As Krivine's comment makes clear, they did not want any discussion of fundamental issues of historical perspective and revolutionary strategy in the working class.

In numerous countries, "broad left parties" affiliated to the NPA joined capitalist governments and carried out attacks on the working class. In Italy, where the Pabloite faction led by Livio Maitan had joined anarchists and factions of the Stalinist Italian Communist Party to form *Rifondazione Comunista*, the party participated in the 2006-2008 Olive Coalition, which cut pensions and waged war in Afghanistan. The Danish Red-Green Alliance (RGA) supported the 2011 Libya war and the Danish government's austerity packages in parliament.

The virtually unimaginable corruption of these parties provided the political background to the USec's embrace of Syriza. In his essay in *New*

Parties of the Left, Danish RGA leader Bertil Videt publicly boasted that the Pabloite parties were ready and willing to abandon and betray what they might present as their principles in exchange for the privilege of holding state power.

He wrote: "Political parties are of course moving targets, which are difficult to capture and categorize ... We have no guarantee that an anti-capitalist party will not be tempted by the taste of power and give up on main principles, as did the Italian Communist Refoundation Party, which supported the Italian military intervention in Afghanistan and US bases in Italy."

This worship of dishonesty and political prostitution forms the essential inner content of the policies of the pseudo-left parties of the USec and of the Syriza government itself. When Syriza emerged as a major contender for national office in 2012, due to mass disaffection with the austerity policies of the EU and Greece's social democratic Pasok party, the USec rapidly embraced it.

The USec issued a statement in May 2012 titled "The future of the workers of Europe is being decided in Greece." It called for a Syriza-led government, declaring: "We want the Greek people to succeed in imposing, by its votes and its mobilizations, a government of all the social and political Left which refuses austerity ... We call for the coming together of all the forces which are fighting against austerity in Greece—Syriza, Antarsya, KKE [the Greek Communist Party], the trade unions, and the other social movements—around an emergency plan."

The USec's false claim that a Syriza government would oppose austerity was made in bad faith, ignoring Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras' prominent statements in the international media to the effect that his criticisms of austerity in Greece were simply for show.

A few days before the USec issued its statement, Tsipras went on his first public tour of Europe, telling the media that he wanted to maintain EU bank bailouts and austerity. He told Reuters, "What is being transmitted in Europe about us is not what we represent and want ... We want to make use of Europe's solidarity and funding to create the basis for our long-term reforms." The USec maintained a deafening silence on countless such remarks subsequently made by Syriza leaders.

The warnings that the WSWS made at the time, based on a class analysis of Syriza's politics, have been vindicated. It warned on May 17, 2012 that Syriza was "a party that speaks for a section of the Greek bourgeoisie that wants more extended debt repayment to avoid economic collapse and cosmetic alterations in the deficit-reduction terms to placate popular opposition..."

The article continued: "Syriza categorically defends the European Union and the euro, while presenting itself as an opponent of austerity, but this circle cannot be squared. Austerity and ever-deeper attacks on the working class are an integral requirement of the bankers' EU and the capitalist order it defends."

The arguments the NPA and its affiliates are giving to justify their promotion of Syriza and their support for its policies in government are highly revealing. They make clear that, should it come to power in Paris, its policies would be essentially no different from those of Syriza.

In the run-up to the January 25 elections in Greece, leading NPA members opposed criticisms of Syriza, acknowledging that its electoral program was shot through with contradictions, but insisting that no warnings should be made about the policies Syriza would carry out.

Sabado wrote, "The 'presidential bureau' and Alexis Tsipras, the leadership of Syriza, are making many contradictory declarations: rejecting troika 'memorandums,' stopping interest payments and writing down much of the debt, but also seeking an agreement with the leaders of the European Union ... This two-faced language will soon run into the policy of the dominant classes in Greece and in Europe: either you accept the diktat of the EU, and there will be a defeat, or you stay faithful to struggle against austerity and call for mobilization."

Even after noting Syriza's "two-faced language," however, Sabado insisted that it was impermissible to warn workers of the betrayal Syriza was preparing. "The role of revolutionaries is not to anticipate and denounce the betrayals of tomorrow. It is to do everything so that the Syriza experience goes as far as possible to satisfy popular demands," he declared.

Having done everything it could to cover up Syriza's reactionary politics and confuse voters as to its program, the NPA is now peddling Syriza's cowardly claims that there is no alternative to surrender to the EU.

Its English-language site, *International Viewpoint*, posted a comment by Stathis Kouvelakis, a leading member of Syriza who teaches philosophy at King's College in London. He writes, "It is very difficult to have a clear view of the current status of the negotiations—'negotiations' being an oxymoron given the sheer asymmetry of the balance of forces, and the fact that one side has a gun (the European Central Bank) pointed at its head."

Kouvelakis insisted that the only hope was that Syriza, like right-wing Greek governments before it, might obtain some minimal concessions in talks with the EU. "Herein, maybe, lies hope. It can't be ruled out that the escalating demands of the EU and the lenders will be rejected by a government that has undertaken some basic commitments to its people," he wrote.

The events in Greece offer the sharpest political lessons for the working class. The perspective of seeking political change to austerity policies by electing "left" officials to administer the capitalist state, following the orientation of petty-bourgeois groups across Europe, is a dead end. The only way forward for the working class is a revolutionary socialist struggle, independent of the bourgeoisie and all its political representatives.

This underscores the central importance of the ICFI's struggle to expose the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left, based on a defense of the historical and political legacy of Trotskyism. Underlying this struggle is not sectarian squabbling over tactics, but fundamental political issues separating the fight to mobilize the working class in a struggle for socialism and pseudo-left rationalizations to justify surrender to the banks and to capitalist politics. The working class can be victorious only in a ruthless political struggle against the entire pseudo-left political milieu.

The critical task facing socialist-minded workers, intellectuals and youth is to draw the lessons of the bankruptcy of the pseudo-left and join the struggle to build sections of the ICFI in Greece, in France, and internationally as the political leadership of the working class.



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