

ISO-allied pseudo-lefts within Syriza defend their capitulation to austerity

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On March 10, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) posted a statement praising Greece's Syriza-led government as fighting for socialism. Written by Antonis Davanellos of the Workers Internationalist Left (DEA), an ISO-affiliated group within Syriza whose specialty is giving Syriza's reactionary policies a pseudo-left cover, the statement defends Syriza's abject capitulation to the austerity policies demanded by the European Union (EU).

Davanellos is attempting to fumigate the stench hanging over Syriza because the record of the Syriza-led government makes all too clear the gulf separating socialism and the working class from the right-wing middle class politics of Syriza and the ISO. After campaigning on promises to end EU austerity policies that have devastated Greece, Syriza betrayed its electoral platform at record speed. Less than a month after coming to power, it signed a February 20 agreement with the EU to impose yet further budget cuts and attacks on Greek workers.

Davanellos' statement--entitled "Where are we going after the agreement?"--hails Syriza as "a broad network of political activists with all of the resistance struggles against austerity of the recent years running through it." The statement continues: "It is a party marked by a transitional approach that seeks social and political victories. It is a party whose 'base,' the vast majority of its membership, is committed to achieving its demands for democracy and paving the way for the complete socialist liberation of society."

What contemptible lies! Syriza is not leading the working class in struggle against capitalism and for socialism. It is leading a capitalist government and continuing the austerity policies of the previous coalition government of the right-wing New Democracy (ND) and social democratic PASOK. It has endorsed all of the previously-agreed EU austerity measures and pledged new budget cuts, privatizations and an increase in the effective retirement age. It is attacking the working class, not defending it.

Davanellos' claim that powerful left-wing forces are hidden somewhere inside Syriza is absurd. Not only has

Syriza's open embrace of right-wing policies produced no break in its ranks, but the forces within Syriza that posture as the party's left wing, like Davanellos, defend its surrender to the EU. His statement is largely devoted to cowardly rationalizations along the lines that there was no alternative to capitulation to the EU.

Whatever the "left" phrases and double-talk, this places him and his political allies, such as the ISO, squarely on the side of capital in its war against the working class in Greece and internationally.

Syriza, he writes, "encountered a double trap set for it through the conscious actions of the defeated coalition government—but especially the European 'institutions' of the European Union and the European Central Bank, in tandem with the International Monetary Fund. Even before the new government took over the ministries, before it had acquired the slightest experience of governing, before it had restored a modicum of control over mechanisms of the state, it was confronted with two dangerous challenges: On the one hand, the possibility of an immediate collapse of the banks. And on the other, a great difficulty in obtaining funds to finance—simultaneously!—the repayment of debt, as well as wages for public workers, pensions and minimal social spending. Faced with this two-pronged threat, the government retreated."

Davanellos' arguments are shot through with bad faith. Capital outflows from Greece and threats from the EU to cut credit to the Greek government were predictable reactions of the banks to the coming to power of a Greek government critical of austerity. If Syriza believed it was powerless to oppose such policies, why did it ask voters to vote for it, promising to end austerity?

If Syriza can do nothing against finance capital, it is not because finance capital is omnipotent, or because Greece's economy is small compared to the rest of the euro zone. It is because Syriza, speaking for the class interests of factions of the bourgeoisie and the affluent middle class, supports finance capital against the working class.

Syriza opposed any political appeal to the broad opposition

to austerity in the European working class. It did not call for mass industrial and political action to bring down the governments of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and France's hated, pro-austerity President François Hollande. Instead, its ministers jetted to Europe's major capitals and financial centers for a few weeks and then—doubtless after consultations with the contacts Syriza made in Washington from party leader and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' trips to the Brookings Institution—promptly capitulated.

Syriza refused to employ any measure that would have given it leverage over the EU and the banks. It could have imposed capital controls to keep investors from pulling their money out of Greece, but it loudly proclaimed that it would not do so. It could have responded to the threats from the EU to cut off credit to Greece by threatening to default on its 300 billion euro debt, which is largely held by other euro zone governments, plunging these governments into their own budget crises. Instead, Syriza repeated again and again that it would take no “unilateral action” on Greece's debt.

These policy decisions are rooted in the reactionary class interests of the petty-bourgeois layers represented by Syriza. The academics, parliamentarians and trade union functionaries in Syriza all feared the market panic and financial turmoil that would have followed any serious threat of a Greek default. Their affluence, no less than the wealth of the bourgeois interests that backed and promoted them in the global media, is lodged in the inflated paper values on the world's major stock and bond markets.

Above all, as Syriza's capitulation to the EU makes clear, any revolutionary upsurge in the working class would be directed against the Syriza government itself. The statement of Davanellos found on the ISO's *Socialist Worker* web site is Greek state propaganda aimed against such a development.

Davanellos' claims that Syriza's policy is socialist, or the closest that workers can hope to get to socialism, are designed to demoralize the workers and block the eruption of protests against Syriza's disgusting betrayal of its election promises to millions of impoverished people who voted for it.

The only perspective Davanellos proposes is to maintain the domination of the pro-capitalist “left” parties in Greece and Europe over the working class. He warns that the coming collapse of support for Syriza could soon lead to a national unity coalition government between Syriza and New Democracy. He calls for Syriza to oppose such a policy and instead work out a political alliance with other supposedly “left” forces such as the Stalinist Greek Communist Party (KKE) and other middle class parties across Europe.

“The task of preventing a further retreat also lies with the

left outside Syriza, which still has considerable strength in Greece,” Davanellos writes. “It can challenge the government by putting forward demands on wages, retirement pensions, education and health care... The task also falls on the international left, especially the European left. In Spain, France, and Italy, and even in Germany itself, supporters of democracy and justice must take action to prevent the ‘institutions’ from strangling and overthrowing the government in Greece.”

This is a new political trap and blind alley for the working class. For years, Syriza blocked a revolutionary movement of the working class by promoting a nationalist strategy of pressuring pro-capitalist parties. It tied workplace struggles to Greece's bankrupt trade union bureaucracy, which is politically tied to PASOK, and promoted the perspective that workers should “pressure” a PASOK government to the left, once it was in office.

This perspective collapsed with the discrediting of PASOK after it took on the task of enforcing the EU's austerity attacks on the living conditions of the Greek working class. Now that Syriza has taken power and is discrediting itself by playing the same anti-working class role, it is appealing to the KKE and other pseudo-left parties across Europe to channel working class resistance into the dead end of trying to pressure a Syriza-led government to the left.

The European pseudo-left parties, from Die Linke in Germany to the Left Bloc in Portugal, have sprung to Syriza's defense because they do not oppose austerity any more than Syriza does. They have voted funding for Greek bailouts and austerity policies in their national parliaments. Should they come to power within their own countries, they would likewise carry out the dictates of the banks.

What will inevitably emerge is an eruption of working class struggles against Syriza and its various pseudo-left defenders internationally. The perspective for workers and youth is not to submit to the right-wing policies of social democratic or pseudo-left parties elected to administer the capitalist state, but to build a political leadership that will fight for the taking of power by the working class as part of an international socialist revolution. This struggle entails an uncompromising exposure and defeat of Syriza and all of its international pseudo-left defenders.



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