

The lessons of the capitulation of Syriza

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The Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) was elected as the Greek government on January 25, promising to end austerity. Three months later, the party has become the key instrument for finance capital to continue imposing social cuts on the working class. The significance of this capitulation goes far beyond the borders of Greece.

The *World Socialist Web Site* already warned a day prior to the election that Syriza offered no alternative to austerity, but rather defended the European Union's (EU) debt regime. We wrote:

“Despite its left-wing facade, Syriza is a bourgeois party that rests on affluent layers of the middle class. Its policies are determined by union bureaucrats, academics, professionals and parliamentary functionaries who seek to defend their privileges by preserving the social order. ... A Tsipras government would not only be prepared to undertake the dirty work of the EU and the IMF, but also to act violently against the working class, which opposes its pledge to ‘strengthen the eurozone’ and ‘maintain a balanced budget’.”

This estimation has been fully confirmed. On Monday, Prime Minister and Syriza chairman Alexis Tsipras made unmistakably clear that he would impose virtually all the cuts demanded by the EU. In order to obtain bailout funds totalling €7.2 billion, he has restructured his negotiating team and made wide-ranging concessions.

In the process, he has continued seamlessly the hated policies of the previous conservative government, both in terms of content and personnel. The newly appointed chief negotiator, Giorgos Chouliarakis, was previously part of the negotiating team under former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, and enjoys the trust of the EU institutions.

At the same time, Tsipras has abandoned the last remaining red lines that his government had set in the

talks. He declared his readiness to cut pensions, increase value-added tax, and postpone any increase in the minimum wage. On this basis, Tsipras hopes to conclude a temporary agreement with the troika on Sunday.

Tsipras' proposal for a referendum on the cuts was aimed at covering his tracks and maintaining unity within his own ranks. In reality, the Syriza government has already taken a decision in favour of the EU's austerity dictates by raiding the finances of pension funds, health insurance and public corporations in order to pay €2 billion to the IMF.

The reforms announced will intensify the social crisis in Greece. Over 25 percent of Greeks are already unemployed. Of those who have a job, 40 percent are paid less than €630 per month. Often, entire families are dependent on one miserly pension.

The continued plundering of Greek society, which has already been bled dry, is intended to serve as an example for wide-ranging cuts across the entire European continent. The fact that the preparations for this social assault are being led by Syriza is a sharp warning to workers. It illustrates the reactionary class character of this organisation.

From the outset, Syriza was an international phenomenon. The party was praised by petty-bourgeois forces around the world, and proclaimed as a role model. Parties such as Podemos in Spain or the Left Party in Germany celebrated Syriza's electoral victory, since their allies were now in power in Greece.

Like Syriza, these tendencies base themselves on privileged layers of the petty bourgeoisie, which are closely tied to the state apparatus and EU institutions, and view the social demands of the working class with extreme hostility.

Their claims that the EU can be reorganised to implement more socially acceptable policies and that the capitalist crisis can be resolved with reforms merely

serve to defend the current set-up and politically disarm the working class. In the face of extreme social conflicts, these forces are increasingly being integrated into official politics. Syriza's sister parties are all eagerly queuing up to follow its example.

A particularly despicable role is played by the various pseudo-left organisations aligned with Syriza. While they criticise one or another decision taken by Syriza with liberal helpings of "left" phrasemongering, they defend the party's essential social and political orientation.

On Wednesday, the leader of Syriza's "left" wing, Panagiotis Lafazanis, published a statement rejecting significant concessions to the EU. "Syriza will never co-sign new measures at the expense of the working classes," it declared. The Syriza government would liberate Greece "from the shackles of servitude and dependence."

With all of the nationalist pathos, Structural Reform Minister Lafazanis avoids concretely attacking the prime minister's announcements. In fact, his party faction voted unanimously in parliament last Friday to plunder the public finances, thereby increasing Greece's dependence on the troika.

The hypocritical leftist phrases are aimed at demobilising the workers in a situation in which the government is preparing for major conflicts. Syriza has left no doubt that it is prepared to adopt brutal measures if workers seek to resist social attacks.

Two weeks ago, Tsipras ordered the clearing of the Technical University in Athens after a little over a dozen activists had maintained an occupation. Following the massacre perpetrated by the regime of the colonels, the deployment of police at this university is highly symbolic in Greece.

On Wednesday, Tsipras met with Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and agreed to expand cooperation on security and the "struggle against terrorism"—euphemisms for military interventions and further attacks on democratic rights.

Workers must take this as a serious warning. In their struggle against austerity, they confront not only the financial elite and EU institutions, but also their pseudo-left defenders.

The only way to combat these serious dangers is through the independent political mobilisation of the entire European working class against the banks and

corporations. This is the most important lesson from the experience of the Syriza government. Such a struggle demands a socialist perspective and the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) as an international revolutionary party. We call upon all our readers to participate in this and register today for the International May Day Online Rally.



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