

Tsipras's surrender rejected as Berlin pushes for regime-change in Greece

Chris Marsden
2 July 2015

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras made a national televised address at 5:30pm yesterday, declaring that Sunday's referendum on whether to accept the terms of a Greek bailout would take place and that he was still calling for a "no" vote.

He made clear that his government's call for a "no" vote on the demands of the "troika" (European Union, International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank) was a negotiating tactic in discussions over an austerity program. He insisted that he wanted a new agreement with the European Union and European Central Bank based on proposals he made earlier that amounted to terms of surrender.

"Come Monday," he declared, "the Greek government will be at the negotiating table after the referendum with better terms for the Greek people."

Just how far Tsipras was prepared to go was made clear in a letter sent Tuesday to the heads of the EU, IMF and ECB. In return for a two-year €30 billion loan from the European Stability Mechanism, he was prepared to accept all of the institutions' basic demands. He requested only a 30 percent discount on VAT (value-added sales tax) for the Greek islands, a three-month delay on moving the retirement age to 67, and a slower phasing out of a special "solidarity grant" for poorer pensioners.

Publication of the letter in the *Financial Times* met with speculation that Tsipras was about to do a deal and call off the referendum. Following Tsipras's public address, a security guard was ordered to take down a huge banner draped from the Finance Ministry building reading, "No to blackmail and austerity" in Greek and English.

Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis went on Twitter to disown the banner, cynically citing the anti-Iraq war slogan "Not in my name" and explaining that it was the work of trade unionists "who did not seek the Ministry's permission."

Tsipras's problem in securing his rotten agreement is

that Germany, the leading imperialist power in Europe, is seeking nothing less than regime-change in Greece and the installation of a government strong enough to impose, by force of arms if necessary, whatever attacks it demands on the working class.

In a speech to the Bundestag prior to Tsipras's address, Chancellor Angela Merkel declared once again that Germany would "await" the results of Sunday's referendum and that a new agreement "is impossible without a German mandate."

Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble added, "You can't in all honesty expect us to talk with them in a situation like this. We need to wait to see what happens in Greece."

There are disagreements within the EU over Berlin's hardline position due to concerns over the economic and political consequences of a "Grexit"—an exit of Greece from the euro zone. French President François Hollande all but publicly rebuked the German stance, declaring, "As a European, I don't want the dislocation of the euro zone, I am not into intransigent comments, into brutal rifts."

But Berlin calls the tune.

After a conference call of the Eurogroup, its president, Jeroen Dijsselbloem, issued a curt statement that "There are no grounds for an extension" of the existing bailout. He added that, regarding the "proposals from the Greek authorities to further amend the proposals from the institutions," the "main decision was that, given the political situation, the rejection of the previous proposals, the referendum which will take place on Sunday, and the recommendation by the Greek government to vote No, we see no grounds for further talks at this point."

Yesterday, Rupert Murdoch's *Times* newspaper ran an exclusive interview with an unnamed "senior German conservative", described as "one of Europe's most influential politicians." He outlined a plan to bring down

the present Syriza government.

“Greece will not get a cent in new euro zone bailout loans while Alexis Tsipras and Yanis Varoufakis remain in power, because Germany will block any such deal,” the politician told Bruno Waterfield.

The newspaper went on to say: “He also lifted the lid on a European Union attempt to push Mr. Tsipras’s left-wing Syriza out of power regardless of the outcome of the vote on July 5.” Summarising the plan, Waterfield wrote, “The senior German conservative said that Angela Merkel’s ruling Christian Democrat Union (CDU) and its Bavarian allies, the Christian Social Union (CSU), would block any request made while the pair, described as ‘communists’, remained in power... We will do everything to get a ‘yes’. Then we will need a new government, then we have to implement measures, he said.”

The unnamed politician revealed another element of the EU’s strategy, asserting that “Martin Schulz, the president of the European Parliament, was involved in secret talks, possibly including Mr. Tsipras—whom he sees as a moderate—to ‘split the Syriza movement’.”

“The aim was to create a ‘technical government’ as a precondition for a new EU bailout, incorporating moderate MPs in Syriza to avoid new elections. In the event of a ‘no’ vote and Syriza continuing to hold the reins of power, the German conservative said, ‘it’s over’ and Greece would have to leave the euro...”

Plans for regime-change in Greece and political work behind the scenes towards engineering a split in Syriza have been spoken of for weeks now—including what the *Daily Telegraph* described as “a shake-up of Mr. Tsipras’ hardline government for a more centrist alliance” that would include the pro-EU To Potami (the River) party.

The plans currently being drawn up involve far more, however, than reshuffling the current government. Amid discussion of a Greek exit from the euro, preparations are well advanced for the mobilization of the security forces, including, no doubt, the army, to repress popular opposition. Indeed, on June 15, Germany’s EU commissioner, Guenther Oettinger, said the EU had urgently to “draw up plans to cope with social unrest in Greece and a break-down of energy supplies and medicine.”

The political bankruptcy of Syriza could not be more plain, nor its actions more dangerous.

Tsipras’s policy has amounted to a series of pathetic improvisations aimed at securing an agreement to maintain Greek membership in the EU at the cost of the devastation of the livelihoods of millions.

Should a “yes” vote be registered in the referendum, it would be the outcome of five months of Syriza working to demobilise and suppress popular opposition to the EU-dictated austerity agenda. Such a vote would be used by Tsipras to shift the blame for accepting the next round of attacks onto the Greek people.

Should, on the other hand, the enormous popular opposition to austerity and the EU result in a “no” vote, Tsipras would declare this to be a mandate for renewed discussions with Greece’s creditors based on his own list of austerity measures, accepting virtually all the dictates of the EU, ECB and IMF.

Among workers in Greece, hostility to the demands of the "troika" are widespread. The Greek bourgeoisie and sections of the upper-middle class are predominantly pro-EU and supportive of austerity. There are, however, layers of the privileged classes that are seeking some sort of better deal, and this is what Syriza represents. However, they are unable to seriously oppose the demands of the European banks because they support capitalism and are opposed to the independent mobilization of the working class.

While workers should vote “no” in Sunday’s referendum, a fight against austerity requires a political break from Syriza by the working class and its mobilisation on the basis of a revolutionary socialist programme. Such a movement would have to take on and defeat the social basis of support for EU policy within Greece through the expropriation of the capitalist class and the nationalization of the banks and major industries under the democratic control of the working class.

To defeat the opposition this would meet from the EU powers, Greek workers must make an appeal to their brothers and sisters throughout Europe for a common struggle against the capitalists and the banks and all their political representatives, and for the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact