

As EU denounces “no” vote, Tsipras moves to the right

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The response of the European powers and the Syriza-led government in Greece to the landslide “no” vote on the austerity measures demanded by the European Union (EU) has brought to the fore the basic political issues confronting the working class.

The massive popular repudiation of the policy of the European banks has shocked both the ruling elites of Europe and their partners within Greece, including Syriza itself. In the face of a relentless campaign of intimidation, including economic blackmail, media propaganda and threats from sections of the military, Greek workers and youth declared overwhelmingly their opposition to the assault on jobs, wages and pensions.

In the capitals of the major European powers and in the United States, a debate is underway over how to respond. Germany has taken the lead in heaping contempt on the rejection of its demands by the Greek working class, responding to Sunday’s vote with more denunciations, threats and ultimatums.

German Social Democrat and Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel said that by holding the referendum, Syriza had “torn down the last bridges across which Europe and Greece could move towards a compromise.” If Greece wanted to stay in the euro zone, he declared, it had to present proposals “that go beyond those presented so far.”

Later on Monday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel held a joint press conference with French President François Hollande during which she stressed, “As things stand, there is no basis for talks on a new programme under the European Stability Mechanism.” She added that previous offers to Greece had been “generous.”

Some officials in Europe and the United States are urging minor modifications of Greece’s debt burden to

keep the country in the euro zone, allow it to repay its loans and give Syriza something to sell to a hostile Greek population. Any proposal along these lines would include 98 percent of the measures rejected in Sunday’s referendum.

Chief among the concerns in the ruling class is what the Greek vote might encourage throughout Europe and internationally. In an editorial published Monday, the *Wall Street Journal* worried that Merkel might eventually “flinch” in response to the vote and offer some concessions. If this happens, the *Journal* warned, “The message will be that Europe’s other debtor nations can also use political extortion to block pro-growth reform... Vote to reject the reforms that creditors demand, and the creditors will reward you anyway.”

“This political contagion,” the *Journal* continued, “is a far greater threat to the integrity of the euro zone than is the immediate fallout from a Greek financial crisis or even a Greek exit from the currency block.”

What does this mouthpiece of Wall Street fear? That any concession to the democratic will of the masses will only encourage workers throughout Europe—and within the United States as well.

For its part, Syriza has responded to the expression of mass opposition within Greece—a clear indication of the leftward trajectory of the Greek working class—by moving sharply to the right, fleeing into the arms of the established parties of the Greek bourgeoisie and the very European institutions that were so overwhelmingly repudiated.

In his address to the millions celebrating victory on Sunday, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras declared, “This is not a mandate for rupture with Europe, but a mandate that bolsters our negotiating strength to achieve a viable deal,” i.e., a deal that is acceptable to the “troika” of the European Union, European Central Bank and

International Monetary Fund.

The first move made yesterday by Tsipras was to secure the resignation of Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis in order to facilitate discussions on debt repayment at today's meeting of the Eurogroup finance ministers. Varoufakis was replaced by Euclid Tsakalotos, one of the many Syriza figures educated in the UK, first at St Paul's public school, where Britain's Conservative Chancellor George Osborne studied, and then at Oxford. The *New York Times* reported that a broader cabinet shake-up was coming, aimed at putting "a more centrist negotiating team in place."

Tsipras then held a six-hour meeting, chaired by Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos, with the leaders of Syriza's coalition partner, the right-wing Independent Greeks (Anel), and the three main pro-austerity parties—New Democracy, PASOK and To Potami. The meeting produced a joint statement issued by Pavlopoulos's office that dropped previous calls for a debt write-down, pleading only for a "commitment [from the EU] to the launch of a substantial discussion as regards tackling the problem of the sustainability of Greek public debt."

Speculation was rife that the meeting presaged the formation of a government of national unity—that is, the unity of the parties of Greek capitalism.

As the WSWS explained prior to the referendum, Syriza called the vote as a cynical political maneuver, designed not to oppose austerity but to legitimize its ongoing collusion with the Greek and international ruling elites. If a "yes" vote had been registered, the government would have stepped down and paved the way for some form of coalition involving the pro-EU austerity parties. But now that nearly two-thirds of the electorate has voted "no," Syriza is pursuing essentially the same course.

The past 24 hours are a salutary warning. As far as the ruling class is concerned, there will be no letup in the austerity onslaught. Either some token measures will be agreed by the euro zone leaders to legitimize Syriza's plan to impose the next round of attacks, or Greece will be forced out of the euro and Syriza or some other political formation will carry out much the same agenda on behalf of the Greek bourgeoisie.

In either scenario, the ruling class will be forced to rely ever more heavily on the police and the armed

forces to suppress social discontent. Just such a plan to deploy thousands of troops and riot police in the event of "widespread and prolonged public disorder"—codenamed Operation Nemesis—was discussed by the Syriza-led government on June 26, only hours before Tsipras announced the referendum vote.

It is only four decades since Greece was under the tyranny of the colonels. Now, in the midst of a generalized economic and social breakdown, the possibility of the oligarchs—the few dozen families that control Greece—calling on the armed forces to "restore order" is very real.

Everything depends on the mobilization of the working class against all those within Greece seeking to impose the dictates of the "troika"—the Greek ruling class, its media, police and armed forces, and all of its parties, including Syriza, a bourgeois party that rests on privileged sections of the upper-middle class.

The wealth of the capitalist class must be expropriated through the nationalization of the banks and major industries, under the democratic control of a workers' government.

This is an international struggle. The working class of Europe must come to the aid of its Greek brothers and sisters. What is done to Greek workers today will be done to the workers of Germany, France, the UK, Spain and Italy tomorrow. The only answer to this international offensive of capital is an international counteroffensive of the working class against the EU and the banks it serves, on the basis of a socialist program.



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