

Berlin: Angry reaction to Syriza betrayal of Greek workers

Our reporters
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On Saturday a team of WSWs reporters and Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG) supporters set up an information table in front of a shopping center in the Berlin district of Neukölln. They spoke with passersby about the attacks mounted by the European Union (EU) on the Greek people and the betrayal carried out by Syriza.

With around 325,000 inhabitants, Neukölln is characterized by high unemployment, almost one in five workers, and a poverty rate of well above 20 percent. The district was governed from 2001 to 2015 by Heinz Buschkowsky, a social democrat who made no secret of his racist attitude towards local migrants and who became notorious far beyond the city limits. His successor, Franziska Giffey, is on the extreme right of the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

The PSG received considerable support in Neukölln during its campaigns for the European elections in 2014 and the federal election in 2013, and many residents are familiar with the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Developments in Greece are being followed by broad layers of the German population. There is considerable sympathy for the plight of the Greek people and the treachery of Syriza is generally perceived as such. At the same time, it is clear that discussion with workers is required to clarify the significance of the developments in the EU, the role of pseudo-left movements such as Syriza and the Left Party in Germany, and the need for a viable political perspective for the working class.

Our reporters met young people from Italy, Spain and Portugal who had left their countries as a result of the austerity diktats of the EU and were now looking for work and training in Berlin.

Attila, a 28-year-old law student, said, “It was hypocritical of the government in Greece to carry out the austerity measures now”, noting that the party had

capitulated to all of the demands of the EU.

“Merkel is certainly taking a tough line”, he said. “The idea of a single Europe should be based on democracy, but this is not possible. Soon, another country will be picked on, perhaps Bulgaria, and Germany is at the heart of the crisis.”

When asked how one should respond to this development, Attila replied, “A revolution perhaps, don’t you agree? Socialism has failed, or rather it was abolished, or perhaps better to say defeated. But one has to introduce a different economic system, with fairer social objectives.”

We asked Dirk, 49, a media designer, what he thought of Syriza’s decision in favour of the austerity program. “Only this government will be able to enforce the austerity package, and that is why the European Union needs this government”, he said. “Of course, [Chancellor Angela] Merkel and [Finance Minister Wolfgang] Schäuble will not allow the government to do what it wants. Now the austerity package already agreed is being enforced.”

When asked about the WSWs view that Greece was to be made an example for workers throughout Europe, Dirk said: “I do not see that quite as negatively. Now, for the first time a voice has been raised loudly via the referendum, declaring: austerity has to be junked, leave it alone. It is also clear that the Syriza government cannot be successful. But maybe they can change things a little so things get going in other countries.”

All in all he regarded Syriza “as a sign of the defeat of the left, not of strength of the left. They came to power when there was no real movement on the streets. They have verbal support, but no real support from the street.” When our reporter interjected that Syriza represented better-off layers, Dirk replied: “I do not know enough about what type of base they have. There

was a general strike during the election campaign, but now nothing is left of it.”

Amin, a salesman in his mid-30s, thought it unfair that all EU governments had ganged up against the government in Greece. He thought the social attacks in Greece were closely related to NATO’s campaign of aggression against Russia. Germany was entirely on the side of the US against Russia.

The Syriza government had really good opportunities, he said, but did not use them. “I am completely against it”, said Amin. “First there is the ‘no’ referendum to austerity, and now they say ‘yes’. There has to be a uniform course of action!”

“Perhaps Tsipras wanted to make a name for himself”, he added. “He had all the power behind him, in the form of the population, and then he turns around and does what he wants! He says ‘no’ to the population, and ‘yes’ to the EU. That should not be possible.”



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