

The pseudo-left covers up for Syriza's betrayal

Alex Lantier
24 July 2015

Wednesday's vote in the Greek parliament, in which Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras rammed through over 900 pages of European Union (EU) austerity measures dictated by Berlin, completes a devastating betrayal of the Greek people by Tsipras's Syriza ("Coalition of the Radical Left") party.

Virtually overnight, Syriza has embraced austerity as if it were the most natural policy in the world, trampling its electoral pledges to end the EU Memorandum and the 61 percent "no" vote against EU austerity in the July 5 referendum. Its agenda of social cuts, reactionary legal "reforms" and privatizations totaling tens of billions of euros will devastate Greece. The consequences will be horrific for millions of Greek workers already facing hunger, joblessness and lack of medical care.

Tsipras, who was marketed as a left-wing firebrand during the January elections, has proven to be a garden variety free market reactionary. Press analyses are already comparing him to François Mitterrand, the Socialist Party leader elected as president of France on a national reform program in 1981, who repudiated his program less than two years later, launching an "austerity turn" to attack the working class. As filthy as Mitterrand's role was, a more accurate comparison for Tsipras, in terms of the starkness of his policies, would be another French politician: Pierre Laval, who went from nominal socialist to right-hand man of Marshal Philippe Pétain under the Nazi Occupation.

In the effort to contain seething anger among workers and youth in Greece, a section of Syriza is posturing as left dissidents to concoct excuses, politically regroup and prevent any lessons from being drawn from their betrayal. One statement from these scoundrels is the "Communiqué of Syriza Youth on the agreement-memorandum and the future of Syriza." The statement was posted on *International Viewpoint*, a pseudo-left journal that is itself desperate to prevent the exposure of Syriza from affecting similar organizations they are promoting internationally,

such as Podemos in Spain and the New Anti-capitalist Party in France.

The Syriza Youth (SY) organization begins by blaming Tsipras's policies on a coup by the EU. Syriza's July 13 deal with the EU, it writes, "is undoubtedly a huge defeat of the forces of the radical Left in Greece. The unprecedented coup d'état carried out by the creditors was only the latest episode in a series of acts of outright blackmail that led the government into a suffocating political impasse."

There was no "coup d'état" against Syriza in Greece. Tsipras stayed in power throughout, consulting with the EU and overseeing the planning, negotiation and passage of draconian austerity measures. As the EU predictably insisted on austerity—the program Syriza had been elected to oppose—Syriza repeatedly capitulated, first by agreeing to prolong the EU austerity Memorandum in February, and then by imposing new austerity measures in July.

As always in the statements of the pseudo-left, the SY tries to hide behind incomprehensible jargon designed to give an air of profundity to its reactionary policies. It proclaims, "It would however be rather elliptical to interpret the outcome of the negotiations as solely determined by the choices of the creditors. We are obliged to evaluate negatively the underestimation of the relationship of forces within the euro zone, the unshakable conviction that rational arguments could persuade the 'institutions' to be in favor of a 'mutually beneficial' agreement," but also that the threat of a Grexit [Greek exit from the euro] could play a catalyzing role for our proposal to prevail. All these points contributed decisively to the absence of an alternative plan of rupture... all of this was a decisive factor in our being politically kidnapped."

In plain English, the SY claims that the policy of the Tsipras government was the result of mistaken notions and ill-placed hopes that have proven unfounded. In fact, Syriza's policies were the product of deliberate

deceptions rooted in the nature of the organization. It came to power fully prepared to implement anti-working class measures and defend capitalism in Greece and Europe. The role of forces like SY and the Left Platform within Greece was to cover up these plans and obscure the class character of Syriza.

In perhaps the most revealing statement, the SY writes that Syriza's "long indulgence in the technical aspect of the negotiations, waiting for an 'honorable compromise' that was considered to be certain, left no space for the enthusiasm and dynamism that the participation of society would have created against the dominance of the technocrats..."

What does this mean? Tsipras and Syriza strung their discussions out, played for time, and did everything they could to disorient popular opposition.

After the landslide "no" vote, no one can claim that the working class and the poorer layers of the Greek population did not want to fight. The "no" vote provoked broad support and enthusiasm in the working class across Europe. However, the main obstacle that emerged was that Syriza itself was firmly opposed to mobilizing the working class in struggle against the EU and austerity.

Reflecting the interests of sections of the Greek bourgeoisie and the affluent middle class, Syriza was desperate to avoid a break with the EU and keep the euro currency. It was ready to accept a deal with the EU on virtually any terms and impose it on the working class.

The SY remains silent as to why Syriza left EU and Greek technocrats undisturbed to pass savage attacks on the working class, however. It scolds Syriza's "incompetent" parliamentary group, the "political undernourishment of the leading bodies of the party," and even "the insufficiency of the mechanism of the party (and of the youth organization)." Nonetheless, it insists that nothing fundamental in Syriza's political line should change.

Syriza is based on a political model common to countless pseudo-left and petty-bourgeois organizations: the building of a party around a charismatic media personality, inevitably a right-wing scoundrel. "Sexy Alexi" plays within Syriza the role played by Pablo Iglesias in Spain's Podemos party, Olivier Besancenot of France's New Anti-capitalist Party, and Beppe Grillo of the Five-Star Movement in Italy. These are organizations whose policies can be manipulated and turned around by finance capital whenever it is required.

The SY calls for the immediate holding of emergency meetings within Syriza to discuss how to preserve the

"historic victory" represented by its coming to power from the fallout of Syriza's imposition of a new EU austerity Memorandum.

In holding the meetings, they write, Syriza "must protect all its members against personal attacks, which are foreign in their methodology to the principles and values of the Left. It is in no way conceivable, in this context, to put aside the major importance of the referendum result. In this case, the government succeeded in making the people a protagonist, by choosing to give it the floor, against the extreme blackmail, the financial asphyxiation, the closed banks, the media frenzy... [I]t bears within it a victorious dynamic."

The coming to power of Syriza was not a historic victory, but a historic fraud, and SY is simply covering for that fraud. Even as it insists that there should be no criticism of Syriza's record, it presents Tsipras's referendum—which he rapidly followed by imposing mass austerity on the Greek people—as yet another victory.

The SY's arguments are typical of the pseudo-left, who are desperate to block the emergence of a politically independent movement of the working class, sustain their influence as much as possible over the masses, and get similar governments elected in Spain, France and beyond. Their betrayal of the Greek people is a warning to the international working class as to what the policies of Podemos in Spain, the Left Front in France, or any of a number of similar pseudo-left groupings would be if they were to come to power.

Recovery from the impact of the betrayal in Greece is possible only through a scathing exposure of the class and political role of the pseudo-left as petty-bourgeois, anti-Marxist agencies of finance capital.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact