

What is the pseudo-left?

The WSWS Editorial Board
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The events in Greece over the past several months constitute a major strategic experience of the Greek working class and youth that is having a significant impact on political consciousness around the world.

The so-called “Coalition of the Radical Left” (Syriza)—despite its use of radical-sounding phraseology and its nominal opposition to austerity—has capitulated entirely to the European banks and institutions. The Syriza government is now implementing policies that will dramatically increase social inequality and turn Greece into a virtual colony of German and European imperialism.

These developments are a striking confirmation of the analysis made by the *World Socialist Web Site* over several years, going back well before Syriza was elected in January of this year. In a resolution adopted at the Socialist Equality Party (US) Congress in July of 2012, for example, it was noted that “as soon as Syriza was faced with the possibility of coming to power, its leader Alexis Tsipras rushed to Germany to assure the banks that his party had no intention of withdrawing from the euro zone. It has sought nothing more radical than the renegotiation of the European banks’ austerity program.”

Throughout the spring of this year, the WSWS organized a series of meetings in which the nature of Syriza was analyzed and warnings were made of its plans to fully accept the austerity demands of the European banks.

In the aftermath of Syriza’s final capitulation, many readers have asked how it is that the WSWS was able to predict so precisely the course of events. This experience is a vindication of the Marxist method, which analyzes political tendencies not on the basis of what they call themselves, but on the basis of their history and program and the social interests they represent.

Over the past several years, the WSWS has developed the conception of an international political tendency that we have described as “pseudo-left,” of which Syriza is only one example.

We would like to call our readers’ attention to the

analysis made by WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North in the Foreword of his newly-released book, *The Frankfurt School, Postmodernism and the Politics of the Pseudo-Left: A Marxist Critique*. North includes a concise and more detailed “working definition” of the “pseudo-left” that will help provide an orientation in the struggle against the influence of these reactionary movements. He writes:

* The pseudo-left denotes political parties, organizations and theoretical/ideological tendencies which utilize populist slogans and democratic phrases to promote the socioeconomic interests of privileged and affluent strata of the middle class. Examples of such parties and tendencies include Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Die Linke in Germany, and numerous offshoots of ex-Trotskyist (i.e., Pabloite) and state capitalist organizations such as the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) in France, the NSSP in Sri Lanka and the International Socialist Organization in the United States. This list could include the remnants and descendants of the “Occupy” movements influenced by anarchist and post-anarchist tendencies. Given the wide variety of petty-bourgeois pseudo-left organizations throughout the world, this is by no means a comprehensive list.

* The pseudo-left is anti-Marxist. It rejects historical materialism, embracing instead various forms of subjective idealism and philosophical irrationalism associated with existentialism, the Frankfurt School and contemporary postmodernism.

* The pseudo-left is anti-socialist, opposes class struggle, and denies the central role of the working class and the necessity of revolution in the progressive transformation of society. It counterposes supra-class populism to the

independent political organization and mass mobilization of the working class against the capitalist system. The economic program of the pseudo-left is, in its essentials, pro-capitalist and nationalistic.

* The pseudo-left promotes “identity politics,” fixating on issues related to nationality, ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality in order to acquire greater influence in corporations, the colleges and universities, the higher-paying professions, the trade unions and in government and state institutions, to effect a more favorable distribution of wealth among the richest 10 percent of the population. The pseudo-left seeks greater access to, rather than the destruction of, social privilege.

* In the imperialist centers of North America, Western Europe and Australasia, the pseudo-left is generally pro-imperialist, and utilizes the slogans of “human rights” to legitimize, and even directly support, neo-colonialist military operations.

North concludes the Foreword to his new book by noting, “The analysis and exposure of the class basis, retrograde theoretical conceptions and reactionary politics of the pseudo-left are especially critical tasks confronting the Trotskyist movement in its struggle to educate the working class, free it from the influence of the petty-bourgeois movements, and establish its political independence as the central progressive and revolutionary force within modern capitalist society.”

The publication of the *Frankfurt School, Postmodernism and the Politics of the Pseudo-Left: A Marxist Critique* marks a significant step toward this goal, and the volume will serve as a valuable aid in the coming struggles of the working class.



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