

The political bankruptcy of Syriza's Left Platform

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On Thursday, the Central Committee of Greece's ruling Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) party gave a green light for Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to negotiate more austerity with the European Union. It postponed discussion of an €86 billion euro zone bailout of Greece until a Syriza party congress in September, after negotiations on the bailout are to have been concluded.

The Central Committee decision exposes the bankruptcy of forces, such as Syriza's Left Platform, that seek to keep seething popular discontent within the political straitjacket of support for Syriza. Even after Tsipras agreed on July 13 to tens of billions of euros in new cuts, repudiating the overwhelming "no" vote in the July 5 referendum on austerity, and a majority of Syriza legislators voted for the cuts, the Left Platform insisted that the way forward was to appeal to Syriza to change its policies.

This grouping of cynics and double-talkers has devoted itself to promoting Syriza's various political stunts as supposed proof that the organization is opposed to austerity. One such maneuver was a July 15 letter signed by 109 of Syriza's 201 Central Committee members protesting Tsipras's austerity deal as an EU "coup" against Greece.

The Central Committee did not even hold a vote on the proposal to postpone discussion of the EU bailout, let alone on the bailout itself. It took the cowardly path of avoiding any vote that would force the Central Committee and the Left Platform to formally take a position for or against the government's austerity policy. The Left Platform reportedly led the push to avoid a roll-call vote.

The Central Committee meeting again highlighted the political and class gulf separating the broad mass of working people in Greece from the bourgeois and upper-

middle-class forces represented by Syriza and its misnamed Left Platform. The July 5 "no" vote had sent an unmistakable signal that the Greek working class was ready for a fight against austerity.

The central obstacle facing the working class, both in Greece and internationally, is the crisis of political leadership. Even after Tsipras ignored the referendum result and agreed to an austerity bailout dictated by Berlin that is even more draconian than those accepted by previous Greek governments, no party in Greece sought to mobilize the working class against the Syriza government, the EU and the banks.

The Left Platform has played a central role in demobilizing popular opposition, seeking to keep workers and youth from drawing any lessons from Syriza's betrayal in order to block the emergence of a politically independent movement of the working class.

The treacherous role of the bogus "left" within Syriza is exemplified by a July 14 interview in *Jacobin* magazine with leading Left Platform member Stathis Kouvelakis, titled "Greece: The Struggle Continues."

Kouvelakis denied that Tsipras's repudiation of Syriza's election pledge to end EU austerity and his imposition of new austerity measures was a betrayal of his promises to the Greek people. He said: "I think the word 'betrayal' is inappropriate if we are to understand what is happening... the notion of betrayal means that at some moment, you make a conscious decision of reneging on your own commitments."

This is an absurd falsification. In pledges made before masses of people in the run-up to last January's election, Tsipras committed himself to ending the EU austerity memorandum. But his entire record in government, from his February 20 agreement to extend the memorandum to his agreement to seek a new EU bailout in exchange for new and even deeper social

cuts, is one of reneging on his commitments to the Greek people.

Kouvelakis gave his interview the day before Syriza was to vote on Tsipras's EU austerity deal in the Greek parliament. His remarks were a signal that the Left Platform would vote "no" only insofar as its vote did not prevent the parliament from approving the new cuts and did not threaten the survival of the Tsipras government.

The Left Platform, Kouvelakis explained, was preparing "a differentiated vote at that stage, which meant some people had to vote 'present' in the vote," rather than voting "no." A "no" vote by the Left Platform could have deprived Tsipras of majority support within his coalition and brought down his government. The Left Platform, Kouvelakis stressed, wanted "to show that their intention was not to somehow overthrow the government."

Even as he made clear that the Left Platform continued to support the Tsipras government, Kouvelakis claimed that a groundswell of opposition to austerity was building up within Syriza. "By the last week of June," he declared, "it was clear that the agreement that was more or less taking shape would not pass the internal test within Syriza and would not pass the test of public opinion." He continued, "Messages were sent to the leadership and to Tsipras himself from inside the party, from well beyond the ranks of the Left Platform, that this was not acceptable."

Kouvelakis's prediction proved totally false. Not only did the Left Platform fail to shift the majority of Syriza to an anti-austerity position, but the Left Platform itself proved to be a defender of Tsipras's reactionary dealings with the EU.

Kouvelakis concluded his interview with a barely veiled attack on the *World Socialist Web Site*, which has opposed Syriza since its foundation and, based on a Marxist analysis, warned that as a pro-capitalist party oriented to the EU, Syriza would inevitably attack the working class.

He denounced the notion that "what you've been saying is vindicated because it's proved true." He added, "It's the usual I-told-you-so strategy. But if you're unable to give a concrete power to that position, politically you are defeated. Because if you are powerless and you have proved unable to actually transform your position into mass practice, then

obviously politically you haven't been vindicated."

This blather surely ranks among the most absurd examples of double-talk. Warnings that Syriza would repudiate its election promises and line up behind the EU's austerity program were not vindicated even though Syriza did precisely that. Why not? Because we (the Left Platform) successfully joined with the Syriza leadership, the other bourgeois parties and the trade unions to prevent the independent mobilization of the working class against the EU and the Greek ruling class fought for by the socialist opponents of Syriza!

The warnings of the WSWs about Syriza have not only been powerfully vindicated, the WSWs's record on the Greek crisis stands as a testament to the power of Marxism and the urgency of the revolutionary socialist and internationalist program advanced solely by the International Committee of the Fourth International. The advanced workers and youth in Greece and throughout Europe will draw vital lessons from the Greek experience, based on the principled and ruthless exposure carried out by the WSWs of the pro-capitalist politics of Syriza and similar pseudo-left organizations—lessons that will prove critical in the development of a revolutionary movement of the Greek and European working class.



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