

Syriza's austerity policies pave way for far right in Greece

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By violating its election pledges to end European Union (EU) austerity, Greece's Syriza-led government is paving the way for the growth of a powerful far-right movement in Greece. After Syriza repudiated the overwhelming no vote in the July 5 referendum on austerity and agreed to impose tens of billions of euros in new austerity measures, this is acknowledged even by members of Syriza.

After Syriza's prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, signed a bail-out deal with the EU on July 13, Thanasis Kourkoulas, a member of the Internationalist Workers Left (DEA) inside Syriza's Left Platform, pointed to the danger posed by the fascist Golden Dawn party. His article, "The fight against Golden Dawn isn't over," was published on the Swiss web site *Al'encontre*, close to France's New Anti-capitalist Party. It was then posted on *Socialist Worker*, the web site of the American International Socialist Organisation (ISO), which is linked to the DEA.

Kourkoulas writes that Golden Dawn has "taken advantage of the current context to present itself as the sole anti-system party working toward a national resistance. It presents SYRIZA as being a traitor 'to the nation' because a majority of its members signed a new Memorandum with the creditors. It also asserts that the entire political system is rotten, and that the charges against the leaders of Golden Dawn, its militants and the organisation itself are motivated by its posture of opposition to the political system."

Kourkoulas adds, "Until now, the majority of the population has not been convinced by these arguments. However, this may change with the new political phase opened by the third Memorandum. The Greek people have not yet been fully informed about the details of the new austerity measures. The resistance is therefore in its opening stages."

Kourkoulas's description of the implications of Syriza's capitulation to EU austerity is a devastating indictment of Syriza. By his own account, Syriza's capitulation to EU austerity is allowing Golden Dawn—a violently xenophobic, anti-Semitic and openly pro-Nazi organisation—to blame EU austerity policies on the "Left" and portray itself as the greatest defenders of the people. Social anger will become all the more explosive as Syriza begins to impose the tens of billions of euros of cuts it agreed on with the EU last month.

The vote for Syriza and the no vote in the July 5 referendum point to deeply rooted opposition in the working class to the austerity policies of European capitalism. However, the only way forward is to mobilise opposition in the working class in Greece and across Europe in struggle against Syriza and the EU, on a socialist and internationalist programme.

The confusion and social anger created by Syriza and its various allies and apologists, for their part, play directly into the hands of the fascists. By uniting around the single largest austerity package since the beginning of the EU's austerity drive in Greece in 2009, they are doing everything they can to block opposition to EU austerity on the left and leave the way open to the far right. Kourkoulas cites Golden Dawn's "postering campaign against the privatisation of the port of Piraeus," agreed upon by Syriza and the EU.

It should be added that Syriza has further legitimised far-right forces by inviting another far-right party, the Independent Greeks (Anel), into its coalition government and promoting it as a progressive organisation.

The dangers posed by the rising influence of violently far-right parties, under conditions of the utter betrayal of the workers by the reactionaries inside Syriza, are

enormous.

In pointing to the danger of Golden Dawn, however, Kourkoulas is acting in political bad faith. Aware that Syriza's policies will provoke social opposition, the Left Platform is deeply worried about the rising anger in the working class and the emergence of workers' struggles against the EU and Syriza itself. It is warning of the influence of Golden Dawn not to fight the danger of the emergence of a fascist movement or government, but to rally support for Syriza, even as the Syriza government escalates its attacks on the workers.

Kourkoulas writes, "The antifascist sentiment of a strong majority of society currently fails to find expression within political institutions or bodies. On the one hand, it should be found within the left, particularly within Syriza, but there are no public statements condemning Golden Dawn for its criminal acts.... There is clearly an underestimation of the danger represented by Golden Dawn in the current context."

Placing demands on right-wing scoundrels like Syriza that they fight against the growth of far-right is a reactionary political lie, as they contribute to the development of far-right policies.

Kourkoulas's proposal for how to respond to a potential rise of Golden Dawn testifies to Syriza's bankruptcy and lack of seriousness. He does not seek to criticise and break with the policy of austerity and capitulation to the EU. Rather, he wants to organise protests to pressure the judiciary to impose harsher sentences on Golden Dawn over their murder of Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, and generally to repress Golden Dawn more harshly.

With Golden Dawn leaders facing trial over Fyssas's murder, Kourkoulas writes, "THE TRIAL against Golden Dawn for being a criminal organisation—often postponed under various pretexts—has been decisive in suspending the actions of fascist vigilante groups."

According to Kourkoulas, "For the immediate future, we are optimistic that Golden Dawn will be unable to gain a wider hearing in society. Nevertheless, the danger is very real. It is therefore critical to include an anti-fascist dimension to every aspect of the anti-austerity fight and the struggles that follow it. We...anticipate holding protests in front of the courthouses as soon as the trials enter their next phase. It is important that we widely publicise that Golden Dawn is not an organisation against the system—that it

supports capital and benefits from its relationship with Greece's rulers, in particular, with weapons manufacturers."

Such protests would do nothing to fight the rise of Golden Dawn. In fact, they would allow Golden Dawn to continue presenting itself as not only the sole opponent of austerity, but also as the victim of the Syriza government's persecution and its interference with the judiciary. This will only strengthen the far right.

As for Kourkoulas's attempt to discredit Golden Dawn by criticising them as allies of Greece's "rulers," such empty phrase-mongering will have no impact whatsoever, coming from what is in fact the ruling party of Greece.



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