

Syriza, pseudo-left maneuver ahead of Greek elections

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On Thursday, Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos named Vasiliki Thanou, the president of Greece's supreme court, as interim prime minister. She now has the task of organising the elections expected to take place on September 20. Pavlopoulos is expected to announce the final date today.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras triggered the election call by resigning last week. In his first television interview since announcing his decision on Wednesday evening, he said he wanted to let the people decide if they agreed with his decision to agree to a new European Union (EU) austerity memorandum.

This is a political fraud. Tsipras very deliberately delayed his resignation until loans from the European institutions had been released, and the associated austerity measures were adopted in parliament. Syriza had thus already begun implementing austerity measures which go far beyond anything enforced by previous governments.

The party did this in complete repudiation of its promises prior to January's election, which it won by a large margin, to end EU austerity in Greece. It also defied the declared will of the Greek people, which voted in the 5 July referendum against further austerity measures.

Under these conditions, calling new elections has nothing to do with democracy. Tsipras is mainly concerned with overcoming the government crisis provoked by his austerity measures, which face widespread popular opposition. Either he will obtain a majority and force through the cuts himself, or he will hand power over to the openly pro-austerity parties.

Tsipras made this quite clear in his interview on Wednesday. "I will not be prime minister in a coalition" with the conservative New Democracy, the social-democratic Pasok, or the liberal To Potami, he

said. "I think that all three parties embody the old political system."

As the Greek daily *Kathimerini* remarked, Tsipras did not exclude going in to coalition with these parties, but only serving as prime minister in such a coalition. Such a coalition is not unlikely. The current austerity measures were adopted in parliament by these three parties, together with Syriza and the Independent Greeks (Anel).

Tsipras vehemently defended the cuts. "I turned no to a bad agreement into a yes with problems, but which has potential," he said. In particular, the agreement with the institutions gave the country "financial breathing space to settle our debts."

This sums up the program of the Tsipras government. While he imposed pension cuts, wage reductions and tax increases against the wishes of the vast majority, he boasts that Greece can now pay its creditors. The alternative to this policy was a "banking crash, perhaps even civil war," according to Tsipras.

Even though Tsipras declared his intention to cushion the impact of his own policies, he left no doubt that his government would continue with anti-social measures. Greeks could not continue to place the blame abroad, he said. Instead, tax evasion and corruption in their own country had to be tackled.

Concern is growing in the political establishment that the massive opposition to austerity in the population, and especially in the working class, as expressed in the referendum, could begin to take more explicit form. According to polls, support for Syriza has already declined sharply, although past polls have proven frequently inaccurate.

To prevent the emergence of an independent movement of the working class, various initiatives are being pursued to contain and suppress popular

opposition. On Tuesday, the group 53+, which was founded within Syriza in July and includes current Finance Minister Euklides Tsakalotos, met. Its members intend to remain within Syriza. However, they are debating whether they should state their readiness to take on posts in a new government, or maintain some distance from the party majority.

In addition, 53 members of the 201-member Syriza central committee resigned on Wednesday. Some had already joined the new Popular Unity Party (LAE), while others are considering offering critical support to Syriza and are waiting until a party congress at the weekend where Tsipras is to give a speech.

LAE was founded by former Syriza Energy Minister Panagiotis Lafazanis and 24 other deputies from the party. Lafazanis accused Tsipras on Thursday of having “given up all of the content of Syriza’s programmatic positions.” Tsipras’ program, Lafazanis said, meant the “final blow to the Greek economy,” he said. He claimed that his party intended to reintroduce pension and wage rates from 2010, prior to the austerity measures.

These pledges are as worthless as those of Syriza prior to coming to power. Lafazanis and his collaborators voted in favour of the austerity dictates drafted by Tsipras on July 10 and only shifted their position after the European institutions demanded more austerity. Even then, they declared their solidarity with the government and promised Tsipras their support.

As part of attempts to form a new government, Lafazanis met with leading representatives of Pasok and the pseudo-left Antarsya alliance. He also sought to bring the discredited trade unions to the negotiating table to strengthen the position of a future government.

Similar manoeuvres are taking place involving parliamentary speaker Zoe Konstantopoulou. According to reports, she is in talks with World War II resistance fighter and longstanding Syriza member Manolis Glezos about founding a new party. According to *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, Konstantopoulou intends to enter into an election agreement with LAE.

All of these formations have nothing more to offer than repeating Syriza’s bankrupt promises. They do not represent the interests of the workers, but of privileged layers of the middle class dissatisfied with the results of Tsipras’ negotiations.



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