

Syriza prepares right-wing government coalition

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Two weeks before elections in Greece, Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras has made clear that, regardless of the result, he will do everything possible to implement the new credit agreement with the EU and the austerity measures it involves.

“We will comply with the agreement with the creditors,” the outgoing prime minister said at a press conference on Monday in Thessaloniki. The agreement was the best possible result of the negotiations, Tsipras insisted. Compliance was “the only way” Greece could emerge from the crisis.

Tsipras had never backed the Memorandum with the EU using such clear words before. He is now openly defending a programme that includes pension and wage cuts and an increase in regressive taxes, declaring that there is no alternative.

Tsipras even went so far as to state that his party would vote for the brutal social cuts contained in the credit agreement even if it was not re-elected on September 20 and was relegated to the opposition benches. Given the current relationship of forces, this can only mean that Syriza is willing to support a government that includes the conservative New Democracy (ND) in implementing the austerity measures demanded by the EU.

Although Tsipras excludes a direct coalition with ND, it is already clear what the campaign promises of the current ruling party are worth. In January, Syriza was elected on the basis of its promises to put an end to the austerity measures. Just a few months later it implemented austerity measures that went even further than those of the previous government.

On Monday, Tsipras also confirmed that he does not have any principled objections to forming a coalition with the pro-austerity parties. At the press conference, he excluded calling further elections and said that there

would be a government coalition if Syriza was the strongest party. Whether the liberal To Potami (The River) or the social democratic Pasok would join such a government was up to them, Tsipras said.

As far as social cuts are concerned, Pasok is the equal of ND. From 2009 to 2011, Pasok was in government alone and implemented the first credit agreement that included deep austerity measures. Because it was then punished for this at the polls, it continued this work from 2011 in various coalitions with the ND.

It is these forces that Tsipras now wants to bring back into government. ND chief Vangelis Meimarakis has already said that his party is ready to form a coalition with Syriza. In recent months, ND, PASOK and To Potami have repeatedly voted for government legislation, ensuring Tsipras a majority. Meimarakis said he is willing to give up the post of prime minister, even if his party emerged as the strongest force.

Because his policies do not differ from those of ND and Pasok, Tsipras has focused his campaign rhetoric increasingly on the issue of corruption, which he claims to be fighting. In Greek politics, cursing about others’ nepotism always serves to hide one’s own swinishness.

In reality, Tsipras’ latest pronouncements show why the prime minister called new elections in the first place. His main aim is to give his right-wing programme a pseudo-democratic legitimacy. Should Syriza become the strongest party, Tsipras would declare it an expression of agreement with the EU’s programme. If ND wins, the result would be the same.

For this reason, workers’ anger is increasingly aimed against the entire political establishment. According to numerous opinion polls, a considerable part of the electorate is undecided about how to vote.

Evel Economakis, a teacher from an Athens suburb, told the WSWS that few believe that Tsipras will keep

any of his limited promises. “People are dazed, confused, and angry,” he said.

Economakis reported on the mood in Athens. When shopping, he encountered a pensioner Manolis who was buying milk and rice. “Tsipras is calling new elections because after the murder he needs to manage the country’s funeral,” Manolis said. “We Greeks have never had a shortage of gravediggers.”

“Nice left-wing government we have,” said a taxi driver waiting at a stand. “It’s imposing a retroactive pension cut, it does away with benefits for people on low salaries, it increases taxes, signs plans for temporary work, and, via the World Bank, is opening the doors wide to foreign investments in a country with salaries of 300 euros a month.”

“There are two sources of power in this world,” a souvlaki wrapper said with a wry smile, “a lot of money, and a lot of people. Syriza surrendered to the former because it didn’t have the guts to rely on the latter.”

Garage attendant Alekos said it was not accidental that people like the president of the Euro Group Jeroen Dijsselbloem and European Stability Mechanism chief Klaus Regling have supported Tsipras. “They want to be sure that the Memorandum will be implemented,” he said.

Economakis reported that many people are critical of the newly formed Popular Unity Party, which split from Syriza after Tsipras called for new elections. It consists mainly of the parliamentary deputies of the Left Platform, who had voted against some parts of the austerity measures but had always defended the government.

Sophia, a ticket inspector from Athens, said the Left Platform had criticised Tsipras but done nothing to prevent the Memorandum. Others, like 50-year-old worker Giorgos, see in the Left Platform an attempt to sell the right-wing policies of Tsipras as “left-wing.”

Larisa, a single mother from Bulgaria who works as a cleaner, was also critical of Popular Unity. “They owe an apology to the people because they didn’t leave Syriza when the ‘no’ of the referendum turned into a ‘yes’,” she said. “They left when Tsipras announced new elections and they knew they wouldn’t be on the electoral lists.”

Tsipras is reacting to workers’ growing anger and despair by insisting that there is no alternative in the

elections, and that the EU’s programme, backed by the Greek ruling class, will be implemented regardless of the results.



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