

Election program of Greece's Popular Unity is a political fraud

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A former faction of Greece's Syriza party is standing in this Sunday's election with its own list of candidates under the name Popular Unity (LAE). The formation, which several small pseudo-left organisations have joined, is a political fraud. Its members are trying to cover their tracks, while presenting a nationalist and anti-working class program.

Even though polls indicate that this bid to create a new version of Syriza will win less than 3 percent of the vote, the party plays an important role for the European bourgeoisie. It aims to prevent the working class from drawing revolutionary conclusions from the political bankruptcy of Syriza.

The formation's election program begins with the call for the establishment of a "great popular patriotic front, characterized by credibility, reliability, and selflessness." Such a front is necessary because Syriza has switched sides. "They now stand on the side of the neoliberal forces and bombard working people and the middle class with new measures directed against the population."

They want to break with the bankrupt, political party system, it goes on to state. This is the way to "revive the betrayed hopes, overcome fear and strengthen the conviction in the victory of the youth and popular no movement of July 5 (the day of the referendum)."

These phrases are nothing but a transparent attempt to cover up their own role in the enforcement of the latest EU austerity dictates. This is because the authors, as members of Syriza's Left Platform, were part of the government and supported virtually all of Syriza's anti-working class program. Popular Unity's leadership is composed of former Syriza parliamentarians, central committee members, and even government ministers. Its founder, Panagiotis Lafazanis, was the environment minister in the Tsipras government.

All of these functionaries fully backed the government. After the overwhelming no vote, when the prime minister, in conjunction with the French government, drafted a new austerity plan that went well beyond the measures contained in the proposal rejected by the public, all but two of the Left Platform's members voted in favour of it.

Only when the EU, under German leadership, demanded even more cuts did many deputies refuse to lend their support. Despite this, they said they would do everything to maintain party unity and support the Syriza government—a government which they now describe as a "neoliberal force."

The Left Platform only left Syriza at the moment when they were practically thrown out. Tsipras called new elections and let it be known that no Left Platform candidate would make it onto the ballot as a Syriza candidate. The members of the Left Platform then declared Syriza to be neoliberal and founded LAE.

In light of this record, it is hardly surprising that not a word can be found in the election platform about the causes for Syriza's capitulation, let alone any accounting for their own criminal betrayal. On the contrary, the bulk of the platform is a word-for-word copy of the program presented by Syriza in January's election.

They thus demand the withdrawal of the memorandum, a pause in debt repayments, the writing off of a large portion of debt, reparation payments from Germany, the redistribution of wealth from the top to the bottom, and finally the nationalisation of the struggling Greek banks. This catalogue of proposals is embellished with numerous vague phrases about democratic planning of the economy and social control of major industry.

The only significant difference from Syriza's

previous programme is the call for the introduction of a national currency. Popular Unity explicitly calls for a Greek exit from the euro. “The introduction of a national currency as the basis for a progressive, forward-looking programme of rebuilding is not only a functioning possibility, it is the possibility of hope” to develop the country, the programme states.

The change of currency is aimed at increasing exports. It will “strengthen exports, limit imports and replace them step-by-step with local products and revive the country’s productive base and income from tourism.” The party also promises major public investments on the basis of the cheap currency.

This capitalist perspective of export-oriented national economic development has nothing to do with “progress,” never mind “hope.” It is deeply anti-working class and reactionary. Essentially it translates into nothing more than the transformation of the country into a low-wage paradise for global investment.

When Popular Unity writes in its program that its policies will not be combined with wage cutting, this is a barefaced lie. In fact, exports would rise because labour costs, particularly for international companies, would be slashed with a cheap currency. By contrast, workers would be largely cut off from imported products, which in Greece include many medications.

Oskar Lafontaine, who published a statement on a “Plan B” for the euro at the weekend with Popular Unity representative Zoe Konstantopoulou and other politicians from across Europe, spoke out two years ago in favour of this solution. At the time, he called for the reintroduction of national currencies in Spain, Portugal and Greece.

“To come closer to achieving once again fair competitiveness,” Lafontaine said in explaining his plan, “countries like Greece, Portugal and Spain need to be 20 to 30 percent cheaper in comparison with the average of EU countries.”

This program is not opposed to the EU’s policy of social cuts, but is rather its continuation and intensification by other means. Like Syriza’s policies, it serves to enrich the banks and major firms at the expense of the workers. A prominent proponent of this project is Germany’s arch-reactionary finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, who is also responsible for the austerity measures.

The EU, which has proven to be the most important

instrument of the financial elite in attacking the living standards of the working class, is not opposed by LAE. Although it sees the introduction of the drachma as a necessity, it finds words of reconciliation for the EU. One of course has to be prepared to hold a referendum on remaining in the alliance, but this is not an obligation, it states.

Popular Unity’s nationalist program is not directed against the reactionary EU, but against the unity of the European working class.

Syriza set itself the goal of obtaining some concessions for its privileged clientele by means of negotiations within the eurozone. From the outset, it was therefore hostile to the unified mobilisation of the European working class against the EU and the capitalist crisis.

Popular Unity’s program is now actively directed towards dividing workers in Europe and playing them off against each other. Huge wage cuts are to be used to obtain a competitive advantage against other countries and to enrich the Greek bourgeoisie and sections of the middle class.

A European movement of the working class against austerity and the EU must therefore be directed against Syriza and its fraudulent split-offs like Popular Unity. The central lesson to be drawn from Syriza’s betrayal is that a revolutionary perspective and an international party are necessary to resist social attacks.



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