

Widespread disillusionment in Greece ahead of Sunday's election

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Whichever party or coalition of parties that emerges as the new government in Greece following tomorrow's elections will be dedicated to imposing even more savage attacks against the working class.

No party represents the interests of the working class in the election.

Syriza, which was swept to power in January on the basis of its stated intention to reverse austerity, is now an openly pro-austerity party. The election was called when Syriza Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras stood down in August, after agreeing with the European Union (EU) a third austerity programme that dwarfs those previously imposed over the last five years.

The deal was agreed just days after the July 5 referendum in which the Greek population voted overwhelmingly to demand an end to all austerity.

From the commanding lead it held in January, Syriza is now running neck and neck in the polls with the conservative New Democracy (ND), which is also committed to imposing the latest austerity package.

According to all polls, no party is anywhere near close to winning the roughly 38 percent support required to establish a parliamentary majority under the Greek electoral system. The other parties that could conceivably form or join a government coalition—the Independent Greeks (Syriza's right-wing xenophobic former coalition partner), The River and the PASOK social democrats—are all champions of austerity.

New Democracy leader Vangelis Meimarakis has declared his party amenable to forming a coalition with Syriza after the election. This week, Tsipras, while stating that Syriza is open to a coalition with other parties, described a Syriza/ND coalition as “unnatural”.

In reality, given that the programme of both parties are now virtually identical, a partnership between the two parties, with or without Tsipras' participation,

cannot be ruled out.

Syriza has haemorrhaged support, with many of its former voters disillusioned, and particularly among the young generation, deserting the party. Syriza's own youth movement has all but collapsed, with just a few dozen people remaining.

An article in the *Australian Financial Review* Friday titled “Empty squares and no crowds: Greeks ignore crucial election” noted, “Inside campaign tents pitched in Athens by various political parties seeking to win over Greek voters, including an immense one set up near Korai Square by the leftist Syriza Party of the former prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, the chairs and tables were empty the other day.”

It cited the comments of Angeliki Stergiou, a 56-year-old, who said, “We heard all those campaign songs. We shouted all those slogans. Again and again. But it made no difference. No one really believes what they say any more.”

This situation, the AFR noted, was in “sharp contrast to the days before Greece's last election, in January, when noisy crowds milled late into the night, debating policy and their country's future.”

Today Tsipras is, “asking Greeks to re-elect him to implement a deal that would impose yet a new round of budget cuts and other unsettling policy changes...”, said the AFR.

“In lots of ways it is an absurd election”, AFR cited Costas Iordanidis, a columnist for the daily newspaper *Kathimerini*. “What we have to do is all decided.”

Following Syriza's defiance of the will of the population after the July referendum, Bloomberg described Tsipras as the EU, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank troika's “new enforcer”. This week it drew attention to the scale of Syriza's capitulation in an article, “How Greece's

markets learned to stop worrying and love Tsipras.” The piece cited the comments of Vassilis Karatzas, the managing director of a hedge fund, Levant Partners. He said, “The market perception of Syriza has changed significantly since the past election. It’s seen as a force that will implement the memorandum.”

Over the last five years, brutal cuts in living standards without precedent in post-war Europe have been enforced. Millions of working class people now live in abject poverty. By 2013, over 44 percent of the Greek population were living on an income below the poverty line. Wages of public sector workers have been halved, and pensions cut by 44 percent. Entire families in Greece survive on nothing more than a monthly pension of €393. Child poverty has doubled and at 40 percent is the highest rate among advanced nations.

Regardless of the result of the election, further political instability and social unrest is certain. One of Tsipras’ main calculations in calling the elections this month was to avoid having them coincide with the beginning of the new austerity onslaught, set to start in October.

A former Syriza deputy, Maria Bolari, now a member of Popular Unity, which was formed when Syriza’s Left Platform split last month, warned this week that social unrest was inevitable. Speaking to Britain’s *Independent*, she said, “There will be instability after the election because there is a great polarisation in the country. As in the years from 2010 to 2013 there will be more big strikes and chaos will return to the streets. When people voted for Syriza last time, it was able to implement its own policies. But if it wins again, it will merely impose the Memorandum’s terms—and the people won’t take it.”

The main role of Popular Unity, an amalgam of various pseudo-left nationalist forces, is to prevent the working class from drawing the necessary lessons from the role of Syriza and their own involvement in its betrayal, in order to politically disarm the working class.

Prior to the January election, the Left Platform, backed by pseudo-left groups internationally, was the loudest voice claiming that Syriza represented the way forward for the working class. In a Perspective written on January 24, 2015, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned the working class in Greece and internationally of the real role that Syriza would play, on behalf of the

global financial elite, if elected.

The WSWS wrote, “Despite its left-wing facade, Syriza is a bourgeois party that rests on affluent layers of the middle class. Its policies are determined by union bureaucrats, academics, professionals and parliamentary functionaries who seek to defend their privileges by preserving the social order...”

“Syriza expressly acknowledges the foundations of Greek, European and international capitalism: private property; the bourgeois state, including its police and army; the euro; the European Union; and NATO. It offers itself as a party that can protect capitalism and its institutions from the threat of social rebellion.”

The Perspective called on “Greek workers not to give any political support to Syriza”. It warned, “A Syriza government that attacked the working class under the cover of left-wing phrases would be grist for the mill of Golden Dawn and other fascist organisations, which would seek to channel the disappointment and anger of oppressed social layers in a reactionary direction.”

These predictions have been borne out, with the most right-wing forces having been strengthened by Syriza’s total capitulation to the EU and global capital. The latest polls show that Golden Dawn, which poses as an opponent of austerity, placing third or fourth.

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