

German Left Party leaders welcome Syriza election victory

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Leaders of the German Left Party have enthusiastically welcomed the victory of Syriza in Sunday's Greek general election, even though Syriza has committed itself to implement the European Union's harshest ever austerity measures.

A day after the election, Syriza Chairman Alexis Tsipras once again formed a government with the right-wing ANEL (Independent Greeks) party to impose far-reaching privatization measures and attacks on the living standards of the Greek population to which he had agreed as part of the third memorandum with the "troika" (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund). This course is enthusiastically supported by the Left Party.

The Left Party leadership could hardly restrain its enthusiasm. Even before the first official projection of the election result was announced on Sunday evening, the co-chairs of the party, Katja Kipping and Bernd Riexinger, released a press statement in which they congratulated Tsipras on his election victory.

They wrote that a large part of the electorate was apparently convinced that "in a crisis, a left-wing government is better than a return to the corrupt old parties." They continued: "The pork-barrel politics of the old parties lavished care and attention on oligarchs, while they displayed no interest in the situation facing workers, the unemployed, young people and pensioners when negotiating with the troika."

This stands reality on its head. The Syriza government was no less prostrate before the oligarchs than its predecessors in New Democracy and PASOK. And it was Tsipras, who, despite an overwhelming vote against further austerity measures, concluded an agreement with creditors in July attacking the livelihoods of millions of Greek workers.

According to Kipping and Riexinger, the low turnout

shows "how undemocratic the policies of the EU and the troika are." They deny that Syriza bears any responsibility for the signing and implementation of the current austerity package. In fact, the low turnout is due to the fact that nearly half of all eligible voters do not trust any of the parties to represent their interests.

Gregor Gysi, the leader of the Left Party in the German Bundestag (parliament), flew to Athens last Friday to express his support for Syriza, standing alongside Tsipras at the final campaign rally. On Sunday evening, Gysi said he was "exceptionally happy for our sister party Syriza and my friend Alexis Tsipras."

Gysi then appealed to the German government, which dictated the draconian austerity package, to "finally respect the electoral mandate of the Greeks and not confront a new left-wing government in Athens with extortion, but make possible a fair, fresh start for the EU partner Greece."

Two months ago, when the Bundestag was discussing the third round of austerity measures for Greece, Gysi declared he would vote for it if he were in Tsipras' shoes. The Left Party then voted against the austerity package for purely tactical reasons, safe in the knowledge that its votes were not needed to secure a majority for the measures.

The enthusiasm with which the Left Party supports Syriza shows that Syriza's role in imposing savage attacks on the working class it is not just a Greek question, but rather an international social and political phenomenon.

Tsipras and Syriza have accepted the austerity measures of German Finance Minister Schäuble and Chancellor Merkel not because there was no way to oppose them. They refused to mobilise the Greek and European working class against the EU because they

speak for wealthy and aspiring middle class layers and sections of the bourgeoisie who have a fundamental interest in maintaining bourgeois order and the capitalist system.

They fear a revolutionary movement of the working class far more than submission to the draconian diktats of Berlin and Brussels.

For the same reason, the Left Party and other pseudo-left tendencies worldwide support the politics of Syriza. They are ready to act with similar brutality against the working class in their own countries.

Left Party deputy Stefan Liebich, a member of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee, expressed this particularly clearly in a comment on the election results in Greece. *Neues Deutschland* quoted him as saying he was pleased not only about the “no” to “the parties that have economically mismanaged Greece,” but also about the weak result for those “who want to leave the euro or the EU.” In this he upholds precisely those institutions that are responsible for the social cuts in Greece.

Other members of the Left Party are of the opinion, with Syriza having revealed itself in a matter of weeks to be a right-wing bourgeois party, that it is futile and even dangerous to seek to stir up illusions in it. They fear that workers will turn to a revolutionary perspective. Therefore, they are working flat out to establish new political traps.

This is the purpose of the so-called “Plan B in Europe,” which was presented at a festival of the Stalinist French Communist Party recently. It mainly serves to hide the traces of Syriza’s betrayal.

Former prominent figures in Syriza and international allies of the party, all of whom have held ministerial posts in bourgeois governments, are playing a leading role in this. Among the initiators are former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, former German Finance Minister and Left Party founder Oskar Lafontaine and Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the French Left Party.

They do not attribute Syriza’s bankruptcy to its class character, which they share, but to its having adopted poor negotiating tactics. They call for the dissolution of the euro into national currencies under the umbrella of the European Union.

The Socialist Alternative Voran (SAV), which is affiliated with the Committee for a Workers

International and operates within the Left Party, appears dismayed by the overly euphoric statements of leading party members. Parliamentary spokeswoman Lucy Redler declared that it is “bad enough” when “the party leadership and Gregor Gysi... play down a neo-liberal catalogue of horrors.” But it is “completely unacceptable” when this position is presented “as the official position of the Left Party in Athens and Germany.”

She reflects the concern that the right-wing policies of Syriza have completely discredited the German Left Party, which is being groomed to impose similar attacks in Germany to those imposed by Syriza in Greece.



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