

A comment on demoralized opportunists

David North
19 April 2016

The anti-Trotskyist blog site of Alex Steiner and Frank Brenner reports a meeting that they hosted in Brooklyn, New York, on April 12. According to the report:

“While the overall turnout of about 30-35 participants was gratifying to the organizers, one disappointment was the lack of representation of members of the Greek community in New York. This is undoubtedly related to the demoralization many Greeks now feel as a result of the betrayal of their hopes by the Syriza government.”

The above paragraph is an indictment of everything Steiner and Brenner posted on their blog site, permanent-revolution.org, between January and July 2015. During those critical six months, they devoted this site to denouncing the ICFI “sectarians,” who were exposing the class character of Syriza and warning that it was preparing a massive betrayal of the working class. Having for months extolled the “experience” of Syriza, they now bemoan “the demoralization” caused by its policies.

To the best, or should one say worst, of their abilities, Steiner and Brenner contributed to that demoralization.

On January 22, 2015, they wrote:

...the conciliatory character of SYRIZA’s leadership should not diminish the magnitude of the historic change that this election represented. For the first time in more than a generation a political party that claimed to be “Left” - even “far-Left” has won a national election in Europe and is forming a government. And the election itself electrified Greece. ... The sectarian groups are blind to the opportunities because they are indifferent to the mass movement. And when that mass movement breaks out as it did in the election of SYRIZA,

they work overtime to make this inconvenient truth go away.

They also published a lengthy denunciation of the ICFI’s appraisal of the Syriza government, written by a Greek opportunist:

One has to be patient and to see what this experiment will bring before condemning the attempt even before it has taken power. Denying political realities and not supporting the ONLY left-leaning elected government in Europe only gives support to the enemies of the left, something that the left has been prone to and used by the right for years and thus accentuating the left’s failures to convince a majority of population that revolution and support of the working class is the only way out.

In its defense of Tsipras’ government, Steiner and Brenner went so far as to object to the WSWS characterization of Syriza as a bourgeois party. They wrote:

Marxists use a category like “bourgeois party” to understand political reality more deeply, but in the hands of a sectarian such a category becomes devoid of content, and little more than a form of name-calling.

This line of attack continued unabated throughout 2015. But now, without explanation, they write of the widespread demoralization caused by the Syriza

government.

The climax of the Steiner-Brenner meeting was a speech by Savas Michael, the leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Greece, who addressed the meeting via Skype from Athens. Michael is a political ally of Steiner, and their principal bond is a shared hatred of the International Committee.

Like Steiner and Brenner, Michael painted the Syriza regime in bright colors in 2015 and denounced the ICFI's warnings. But ecstasy has given way to agony. According to the report, Michael "likened that betrayal to the historical betrayal of the Greek partisans in 1944 by the agreement drawn up by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt and the later even worse betrayal by the Greek Stalinists when they forced the fighters in the civil war to surrender their arms to the British in 1945."

It does not diminish the treachery of Syriza to avoid historically inaccurate comparisons. But Savas Michael is an opportunist political type that abounds in Greece. He thinks with his lungs and confuses oratorical bombast with political analysis. After devoting himself tirelessly in 2015 to celebrating the revolutionary potential of the Syriza regime, he now compares the post-referendum situation to the catastrophic events of the Greek civil war, which cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers. This is a wild exaggeration, and does nothing to clarify the present political situation.

In fact, Michael does not take his own exaggerations seriously. Having compared the betrayal of July 2015 to the destruction of the Greek workers' movement in the 1940s, Michael—according to the report on the Steiner-Brenner blog site—"noted that while the working class had been betrayed, they have not been defeated."

This is sophistry of the worst sort. The working class, he claims, has suffered a monumental "betrayal"—which Michael compares to the disasters of the 1940s—but it has not suffered a "defeat."

Those who are familiar with Savas Michael's political history will recognize the source of his cynical distinction between "betrayal" and "defeat." He learned this opportunist word play from Gerry Healy, who, in the period of his return to Pabloism, spoke of the "undefeated nature of the working class" in order to downplay the political significance and impact of every setback suffered by the working class. Savas Michael lapped up this political nonsense, not only out of

stupidity, but also because it enabled him to evade political responsibility for the consequences of his own opportunism. In more personal terms, as long as no harm comes to Michael, the betrayals of the working class do not amount to a "defeat." A mere *betrayal* means that living standards of the working class plummet. A *defeat* occurs only when it might become impossible for Michael to publicly dispense his pseudo-dialectical platitudes at one of his favorite Athenian cafes.

As for Steiner and Brenner, who denounced the International Committee in July 2015 for stating that the Greek working class had suffered a political defeat, they provide no accounting of their political role during the events of 2015. They fail to explain why they devoted all their political energies to attacking the International Committee's exposure of the criminal duplicity of the Syriza government.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact