

Greek Prime Minister Tsipras embraces Trump

Alex Lantier**19 October 2017**

A degrading spectacle unfolded Tuesday in Washington, as Alexis Tsipras, prime minister of Greece and leader of the “Coalition of the Radical Left” (Syriza), visited US President Donald Trump. Prostrating himself before America’s right-wing president at a joint press conference, the leading representative of Europe’s middle-class “left” boasted that Greece was safe for Wall Street and the Pentagon.

Under conditions in which the Trump administration is despised by masses of workers in Greece and throughout Europe, the Greek prime minister declared US-Greek relations to be “at their best” since the end of World War II.

Tsipras made clear that after nearly three years of devastating European Union austerity imposed by his government on the working class, there are lots of profits to be made in Greece. Smiling as Trump praised the Syriza government’s “continued implementation of reform” and announced that it will spend \$2.4 billion on upgrading US-made F-16 fighter jets, Tsipras hailed the “common democratic principles” he shares with Trump. Officials in Greece, he said, “look forward to attracting US investments.”

Tsipras made an unambiguous appeal to the US war machine. He and Trump alluded to the fact that Athens and Washington plan to upgrade the US naval base at Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete and open a new US base elsewhere on the island, putting US forces in range of key war theaters such as Syria and Iraq. Claiming that Washington helps Greece with “fundamental national concerns in the areas of security and defense,” Tsipras asked Trump to help resolve Greco-Turkish conflicts over Cyprus.

Tsipras hailed American policy in the Middle East and the Balkans, where US wars have claimed millions of lives and turned tens of millions into refugees. The

United States, he said, “promotes cooperation with the Middle East and the Balkans, which contribute to the security and the growth of the area.” Tsipras dismissed a journalist who recalled that, during the US presidential election last year, Tsipras called the prospect of a Trump victory “evil.” Tsipras said, “The US is a very strong power and its ability to intervene for good is very, very important... We have common values.”

Tsipras’ statement that he shares “common values” with Trump is a devastating indictment not only of Syriza, but of all the “left” parties of the affluent middle class that promoted Syriza and its 2015 election victory. It is the culmination of a strategic experience of the international working class.

Petty-bourgeois “post-Marxist” parties worldwide, such as Spain’s Podemos, France’s New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), Germany’s Left Party and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States, hailed the election of Syriza in January 2015. Emerging from the post-1968 student movement and sharing a postmodernist rejection of the revolutionary role of the working class and of Marxism, they all promoted Tsipras’ lying promises to negotiate an end to EU austerity.

They dreamed of following Tsipras’ path and leading a capitalist government. Podemos General Secretary Pablo Iglesias campaigned with Tsipras in Greece, hailing Tsipras as a “lion” and shouting, “Syriza, Podemos, we will conquer!” The NPA declared, “The election victory of Syriza is excellent news. It fills everyone with hope who is fighting against austerity in Europe.” The ISO, whose Greek affiliates were inside Syriza and went into government with Tsipras, called Syriza’s victory a precondition for “the final victory of the whole of the left and of our people.”

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) alone warned that the anti-Marxist, pro-capitalist and nationalist character of Syriza's program was a trap, advancing instead the perspective of the international revolutionary mobilization of the European working class against austerity, in solidarity with the Greek workers. The ICFI's criticisms of Syriza were vindicated by Tsipras' disgusting betrayal of his election promises.

Syriza took office after mass protests of Greek workers and youth against austerity, pledging to cancel the EU austerity Memorandum. When Berlin threatened to expel Greece from the euro zone, however, Syriza capitulated almost overnight. It agreed four weeks after coming to power to respect the EU Memorandum, then trampled underfoot the landslide "no" vote of the Greek people in Syriza's own referendum on EU austerity in July 2015. It imposed billions of euros in new cuts.

In the run-up to the 2015 Greek election, as Tsipras toured the major imperialist capitals to reassure the international bourgeoisie of his reliability, the *World Socialist Web Site* repeatedly warned of the pro-capitalist and pro-European Union program of Syriza.

In 2013, the WSWS wrote on Tsipras' first trip to the Brookings Institution in Washington, where he auditioned for the Greek prime ministership with the US State Department, the International Monetary Fund and the CIA. Tsipras, the WSWS noted, got top marks: the IMF called him "constructive and sincere," and Syriza said Tsipras and the State Department had reached a "common assessment." Tsipras told his Brookings Institution audience, "I hope I've convinced you that I'm not as dangerous as some people think I am."

Syriza's petty bourgeois allies only grew more enthusiastic as they read such reports. The more Tsipras went to Washington, New York and the European capitals over the ensuing months to reassure the banks, the more loudly and insistently these forces promoted him, with one eye fixed on their stock portfolios and the other on their chances of becoming government ministers.

Critical strategic lessons must be drawn. After a quarter-century of escalating imperialist war and austerity since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, European capitalism has failed. The moribund

character of Greek capitalism, with 21 percent unemployment (42 percent among youth) despite boosted competitiveness from wage cuts of 40 percent on average, is only one of the sharpest expressions of a broader crisis.

As the ICFI explained in its 2015 statement *The Political Lessons of Syriza's Betrayal in Greece*, the only genuine alternative lies in a return to the revolutionary traditions of the Bolshevik Party, which led the working class to power in the October Revolution a century ago, and of Trotskyism. As the ICFI stated:

The only way forward is through a genuinely revolutionary policy, mobilizing the working class in Greece and internationally in struggle. It requires a direct assault on the capitalist class, the confiscation of their wealth, the seizure of the major banks and productive forces, in order to place them under the democratic control of working people, and the creation of workers states across Europe and the world. Such struggles require the building of Marxist parties to offer political leadership to the working class, in ruthless struggle against parties like Syriza.

The Marxist parties that are to be built are sections of the ICFI, the only political tendency that told the workers the truth about the reactionary class character of Syriza.



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