

After years of austerity measures, “radical left” Syriza suffers devastating defeat in Greek elections

Alex Lantier
8 July 2019

The right-wing New Democracy (ND) party defeated Syriza (“Coalition of the Radical Left”) in yesterday’s legislative elections in Greece. This ends four years of the “left populist” Syriza government, which betrayed its electoral promises to end European Union (EU) austerity measures imposed after the 2008 Wall Street crash.

ND received 39.7 percent of the vote, while Syriza received only 31.6 percent. The Movement for Change (KINAL), the re-branded version of the discredited, pro-austerity PASOK social democrats, obtained 7.9 percent. The Stalinist Greek Communist Party (KKE), the far-right Greek Solution, and the Mera25 movement of former Syriza Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis rounded out the list of parties that surpassed the 3 percent threshold to enter parliament, with 5.4, 3.8 and 3.5 percent, respectively.

The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party failed to reach the 3 percent threshold and was eliminated. Several far-right parliamentarians had joined ND or Syriza.

The victory of ND is not an expression of the movement of workers and youth to the right. Instead, it reflects mass disaffection with the entire political establishment and broad popular disgust with Syriza. The abstention rate reached 42 percent, the highest in Greece since the re-establishment of parliamentary-democratic rule 45 years ago, after the bloody 1967-1974 dictatorship of the CIA-backed “junta of the colonels.”

Outgoing Syriza Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras called ND candidate Kyriakos Mitsotakis in the early evening to concede the elections. According to initial estimates, ND will have 158 seats in the 300-seat parliament, Syriza 86, KINAL 22, the KKE 15, Greek Solution 10,

and Mera25 nine.

Mitsotakis gave a brief address pledging to continue pro-business measures to slash taxes and social spending, dangling the hope that this would encourage international investors to hire super-exploited Greek workers. “I am committed to fewer taxes, many investments, for good and new jobs, and growth which will bring better salaries and higher pensions in an efficient state,” he said.

Mitsotakis received messages of congratulations from EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In a letter to Mitsotakis published on Twitter, Juncker promised to impose more EU austerity on Greece, writing: “A lot has been achieved. But a lot remains to be done.”

Tsipras, for his part, issued a last statement defending his record of imposing the single largest package of EU austerity measures ever agreed upon in Greece. “Today, with our head held high we accept the people’s verdict. To bring Greece to where it is today we had to take difficult decisions at a heavy political cost,” Tsipras declared.

Tsipras arrogantly patted himself on the back, praising the “the significant achievements to protect the social majority and the workers” he claimed were made under his government. “We hold our heads up high as the Greece we are handing over in no way resembles the Greece we took over four years ago,” Tsipras said. He also issued empty, lying promises to transform Syriza into a “large progressive democratic party” striving to “protect the interests of the working people.”

In fact, Syriza has overseen billions of euros in cuts to spending on basic social programmes including

pensions, healthcare and education. Half of Greek youth remain unemployed, and half of Greeks aged 18 to 35 remain dependent on financial help from relatives. Overall unemployment has fallen somewhat from 23 to a still-astronomical 18 percent, largely on the basis of the widespread resort to gig economy jobs.

Basic labour rights, including to a salary and a minimum wage, have been shredded. One Greek worker in three works on a part-time salary of €317 per month, or half the official minimum wage. Bosses routinely refuse to provide social insurance to workers or force them to give back large portions of their salaries as kickbacks to the company. These slave-labour conditions are enforced by increasing employer violence targeting employees who try to defend their fundamental social rights.

“In the northern city of Thessaloniki, four reports of battery by employers were reported over a five-month period,” the right-wing daily *Kathimerini* wrote.

Syriza oversees some of the worst social conditions and most violent foreign policies of any government in Europe. According to Eurostat, 34.8 percent of the Greek population lives in poverty. At the same time, Tsipras has built a network of squalid concentration camps to detain Middle Eastern refugees fleeing imperialist wars in nearby Syria and Iraq. Syriza has sold massive quantities of weaponry to the Saudi monarchy for its genocidal war in Yemen.

The “radical left” Syriza and similar organisations internationally are not left-wing or socialist parties, but right-wing, pseudo-left parties representing privileged layers of the upper-middle class.

As election results emerged yesterday, Syriza officials could not stop themselves from denouncing the Greek people as ungrateful, insisting that workers should thank Tsipras for his record. *L’Humanité*, the newspaper of Syriza’s French ally, the Stalinist French Communist Party, reported Syriza members taking to social media to denounce “voters who did not understand what the government did for them.” Syriza minister Alekos Flambouraris berated “voters who did not understand how they were voting.”

While *L’Humanité* mildly criticised this as “self-destructive public relations,” the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left milieu in Europe that promoted Syriza before its election is still defending it—even after Syriza has been thrown out of office by angry voters

disillusioned with its lies.

Pablo Iglesias, the head of Spain’s Podemos party that is Syriza’s closest ally, hailed Tsipras for supposedly having “the courage to govern with all Greek and European powers against him.” In a Tweet, Iglesias added: “Those who never try will never take the risk of being wrong. We did not take Manhattan, but you were worthy and brave.”

Such fraudulent remarks point to the dead end of any attempts by the working class to improve its conditions by voting for supposedly “left” factions of the ruling elite. These forces are themselves only tools of the banks and the EU.

The only way forward is an international struggle to expropriate the financial aristocracy via the revolutionary mobilisation of workers across Europe and worldwide, carried out independently of and against pseudo-left reactionaries like Syriza and Tsipras.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)