

Syriza leader Tsipras offers collaboration with New Democracy against refugees and Turkey

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This month Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) leader and former prime minister Alexis Tsipras boasted of his anti-immigration record, while offering cooperation to the New Democracy (ND) government in both its anti-migrant offensive and in any hostilities towards Turkey.

In a TV interview on TV Channel *Mega*, Tsipras backed Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' policy of closing the land border with Turkey at the Evros river. "Given this mass attempt of inflows into the country, in all honesty every government would have done the same thing," he said.

Greece was turned into Europe's border guard and jailer under Tsipras's government, as part of the dirty deal signed by the European Union (EU) and Turkey. This saw thousands of refugees and migrants interned in camps like Moria in Lesbos, dubbed "the worst refugee camp in the world."

Tsipras boasted that Syriza not only pioneered the moves now being carried out by the conservative ND but did them more efficiently. "In 2015 we had 860,000 recorded entries [into the country]. Where did these enter the country? From our islands. And why did they enter via our islands? Is it because they wanted to risk their lives at sea by drowning or because they enjoyed water sports? It was because [the land border with Turkey] at Evros was shut!"

Emphasising his own repressive credentials, Tsipras denounced ND for not implementing plans to have water patrols on the river Evros and other measures to strengthen the border guard.

Tsipras is signing off on a policy of brutal repression of refugees waged jointly by the government, fascist thugs who have benefited most from the stoking up of chauvinism and xenophobia, and the European Union.

Mitsotakis met with senior EU officials on March 3 in the town of Kastanies in the Evros border region. He declared "an asymmetrical threat against Greece's Eastern borders, which are also European borders. The unlawful entry of thousands of people turns into a breach of our sovereign

territory, with people of unknown origin and unknown purposes at the forefront, who don't hesitate to blatantly use violence to enter Greek territory."

This filth is magnified by the media, with *Ta Nea* journalist Yiannis Pretenteris writing, "When we have an invasion, we push back this invasion. We guard the borders so not even a mosquito can enter. We guard them with tear gas, with fences, with beatings, with shields, punches and kicks, with weapons, if necessary. This is what we did in 1940. This is what we are doing now."

A Facebook page called "Illegal Immigrant Hunters Association" was set up by far-right activists from the city of Volos in the Thessaly region of Greece. According to a report on *e-thessalia*, the page was set up on March 3 following the attack on refugees at the border in Evros with a view to the fascists going there to join the other vigilante groups, as well as plans to organise a counter-demonstration during a local anti-racism rally in that week.

According to the article, the 300-strong group was full of "hateful posts, pictures of knives and arms alongside their gun licences." The group's main picture was a Greek flag flanked by a hand-grenade and two knives, with the Greek commando insignia in its centre.

Following an outcry on social media, the Facebook page administrator was taken in for questioning by police but was released without charges. Instead, the case was referred to the local prosecutor to rule whether anti-racism laws were broken—a common method of putting the case to rest. The page was subsequently renamed as "Volos Patriots' Association."

A video posted online shows a farmer at Evros driving a tractor next to the enormous razor-wired border fence spraying pesticide onto refugees, who are forced to flee, while policemen look on. In front of the tractor is an army vehicle. Amidst the laughter of the onlookers, a voice is heard saying: "Spray them. Spray the faggots."

The fascist Golden Dawn movement has been given a

lease of life through its involvement in anti-refugee attacks. At the beginning of the month, *Deutsche Welle* photojournalist Michael Trammer was assaulted by far-right thugs in Lesbos. A few days after, an arson attack destroyed a refugee shelter run by the NGO, “One Happy Family.”

This has Europe-wide implications. Lesbos has become the go-to destination for far-right activists from all over Europe. In the same week as the arson, a group of neo-Nazis from Germany and Austria flew to Lesbos’ capital Mytilini. According to eyewitnesses, they were attacked by local residents after one fascist shouted, “We will do to you the same as we did in Kalavryta”—a reference to the 1943 Kalavryta massacre committed by the Nazis in World War Two, which saw the near-extermination of the town’s male population with 693 killed by firing squads and a thousand houses looted and burned.

Far-right British media figure Katie Hopkins tweeted March 7 a video of security forces attacking migrants at the border, commenting, “Erdogan says he will flood Europe with Muslims until the Crescent triumphs over the Cross. This is the border with Greece. Mosque in the distance. Soldiers of the Cross holding the line. This is biblical.”

Tsipras allies himself with such forces, portraying the refugee influx in identical terms—as an invasion orchestrated by Turkey that Greece must counter with EU support.

Asked about Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s role in instigating the migrant inflows, Tsipras insisted, “The crucial thing is for us .. to realise that we are up against a geopolitical threat. Not only because of the suffering of refugees, whom we must not treat as enemies and invaders, but from a geopolitical threat from Turkey.” Offering a proposal to collaborate with ND, he added, “And when we have such a geopolitical threat then all political forces ought to have if not solidarity then at least a framework for communication.”

Turkey, he added, is not only being provocative with the refugee crisis but also by sending an oil and gas exploration vessel into waters within Greece’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), as well as by signing a supply agreement with Libya, which cuts across Greece’s sovereign rights.

Tsipras praised the initial effectiveness of the Turkey-EU agreement. But now, he complained, with Turkey unilaterally breaking this agreement, Greece is doing nothing to force the EU to bring Turkey to task. The ND government should threaten to veto all European Council decisions if the EU “doesn’t bring Turkey into line, with the threat of sanctions if required.

“It’s not just the refugee crisis at stake. Turkey has geopolitical aims. Turkey is using refugees as a tool to reach those aims. Tomorrow we could see Turkey asserting those aims in other areas such as Turkey carrying out explorations

in Greece’s EEZ based on the Turkey-Libya agreement.”

He again boasted of his own record of securing multilateral alliances including friendly relations with the US, Russia and China: “We boosted the country’s geopolitical standing.”

When the interviewer mentioned to Tsipras that Syriza Youth wanted open borders, he seized on the opportunity to stress his own reliability to the Greek ruling class: “Young people have the right to demand and even dream of Utopia... However, for those us who deal with the real world, which sometimes is brutal, this means that we have a responsibility to act based on our values.” This meant above all “safeguarding national security.”

Anti-refugee pogroms, the growth of the far right and the threat of war between Greece and Turkey—such is the legacy of the Syriza government, which pseudo-left groups everywhere hailed as a model for the struggle against austerity in Europe and internationally.

In its statement on November 13, 2015, “The Political Lessons of Syriza’s Betrayal in Greece,” the International Committee of the Fourth International insisted, “The Syriza experience points to the necessity of a fundamental political re-orientation of the working class, youth, and socialist-minded intellectuals. Faced with a global economic crisis unprecedented since the 1930s and a savage onslaught by the entire capitalist class, the working class cannot defend itself by electing new, ‘left’ capitalist governments.

“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.”

Acting on that warning, which has since been vindicated by the actions of Syriza and by Podemos in Spain, Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party in the UK and Bernie Sanders in the US, must become the new axis of struggle for the Greek, European and international working class.



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