YDSA develops ties with SYRIZA youth, Greek party of austerity and police repression

Sam Wayne
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Members of the Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) recently published a joint statement with the youth section of SYRIZA, the pseudo-left party that has implemented austerity and police repression in Greece.

In their statement, YDSA and SYRIZA Youth members write jointly on the "global problems of police brutality and capitalism." The authors include Spyros Kasapis (member of both SYRIZA Youth and the YDSA chapter at the University of Michigan) and Vicky Tsefala (head of the SYRIZA Youth International Committee). Elias Khoury, also of the YDSA at the University of Michigan, is listed as the editor of the piece.

The joint statement, which is published in YDSA's publication the *Activist*, focuses on the police murder of George Floyd and the mass protests that have broken out across the United States. The authors also cite a parallel development in Greece when large protests broke out in response to the killing of Alexis Grigoropoulos, who was shot dead in December of 2008 by Greek police on his 15th birthday. The shooting sparked one of the largest protests in Greece since the fall of the Papadopoulos dictatorship in 1974.

The authors note the similarities between the response of the Trump government and the Greek government: "The government responded to our direct action as they usually do—with more violence. It was clear that the state was far more concerned with preserving its own power than meeting the needs of the Greek people."

The authors fail to mention, however, that SYRIZA, when it came to power in Greece in 2015, carried out violent attacks on protesters, including a violent assault on protesting pensioners.

In October of 2015, a small group of retirees marched through Athens city center to request a meeting with the SYRIZA Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. Police blocked the street to the parliament building with police cars and forcibly dispersed the demonstration.

When angry pensioners tried to break through the blockade and overturn a police car, units of riot police tossed tear gas into the crowd at close range. Elderly men and women, some with crutches, had to retreat, gasping for breath. The protests were in opposition to drastic cuts introduced by the SYRIZA government that had been agreed as part of the most recent austerity package. Tens of thousands of retired Greek workers were affected by the cuts.

The crackdown on the elderly protesters came just months after another violent crackdown on protesters at the Technical University of Athens who were also opposing the massive austerity. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras pledged publicly that the SYRIZA government would do what was required to maintain "law and order."

These actions were an expression of the role of SYRIZA in enforcing the demands of the Greek and European ruling class. After campaigning against austerity and "neoliberalism," only weeks after coming to power, SYRIZA betrayed its electoral promises and pushed through austerity policies despite overwhelming opposition. The hostility of workers and youth to this betrayal was ultimately expressed in the July 2019 election, when SYRIZA was defeated by the right-wing New Democracy Party.

Like the Democratic Socialists of America, SYRIZA is not opposed to capitalism and has no intention of leading or participating in any struggle of the working class against capitalist rule. For all the talk of rejecting "shallow solutions" and addressing the "root causes" of the issues, including police brutality, the statement

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provides no political program. While the authors of the statement repeatedly allude to a "corrupt political system" and "systems of oppression," the word *capitalism* does not make a single appearance in the entire statement. This is no oversight.

The rise, reign and demise of SYRIZA has provided a critical strategic experience that must be studied by workers and youth. The *World Socialist Web Site* has carefully followed SYRIZA and provided prescient warnings and analysis of the organization. Going all the way back to 2012, the WSWS warned workers of SYRIZA's political function:

> In the coming class struggles, SYRIZA will confront the workers as an enemy. Its aim, whether in or out of power, is to contain popular opposition to austerity policies and maintain the political domination of finance capital over the working class. Should SYRIZA be allowed to take power by the Greek ruling class, in an attempt to head off the radicalization of the population, this will produce only further disappointments and defeats for the working class.

The YDSA statement is a transparent attempt to cover over SYRIZA's political betrayals, with its authors hoping that workers and youth in the US are not familiar with the repression and austerity that was carried out by the party.

The statement ends with the following: "We hope that SYRIZA Youth and the YDSA can use our shared goals to cultivate a stronger bond between the two of us going forward."

The fact that a YDSA chapter is seeking to collaborate and develop close ties with such an organization, without reservation or a breath of criticism, merely reflects the fact that the DSA serves a similar function within the United States.

In the 2020 elections, the role of the DSA and the YDSA has been to campaign for the Democrat Bernie Sanders, who, after dropping out of the race, has thrown his full support behind the right-wing campaign of Joe Biden. The DSA has no more to do with socialism than SYRIZA.

The outcome of the SYRIZA government is not an aberration within the international trend of pseudo-left and "left-populist" movements. Whether it is Sanders in the United States, Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, Podemos in Spain, the Left Party in Germany or the Workers Party in Brazil, these are parties and individuals that utilize left slogans in the attempt to keep workers and young people trapped within the framework of bourgeois politics.

The way forward is a turn to the perspective of Marxism and Trotskyism: the revolutionary mobilization of the industrial and economic power of the international working class on the basis of a fight for genuine socialism. A new revolutionary leadership is needed within the working class. That leadership is the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the student movement of the Socialist Equality Party and the ICFI, fights for the revival of a socialist movement among young people, as part of an international socialist movement of the entire working class.

We urge students and young workers to join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality and the Socialist Equality Party, study the history of the ICFI and its fight to defend genuine Marxism and join the fight for real socialism.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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