

A reply to the OKDE-Spartakos party's letter on Greek school occupations

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The *World Socialist Web Site* received the following letter from a member of OKDE-Spartakos, the Greek affiliates of France's middle class New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). The letter criticizes the WSWS article *Révolution Permanente* (NPA) silent on Greek youth protests against COVID-19, which exposed the *Révolution Permanente* website's complicity in an international media blackout of mass student protests in Greece against the murderous back-to-school policy. There follows a response from Alex Lantier.

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This is Manos, a member of the political bureau of OKDE-Spartakos in Greece. I have read an article of yours regarding the silence of *Revolution Permanente* about the ongoing youth movement in Greece. In this article, a number of pieces of false or misleading information appear regarding our organization.

a. Our organization is said to have direct links with the French NPA. This is not quite accurate. We are part of the USFI, particularly of the public permanent tendency called "Tendency for a Revolutionary International," which opposes the orientation of the international. The NPA includes members of various internationals and tendencies, and it, therefore, has no official direct link to us.

b. By writing that OKDE-Spartakos has direct links with the NPA, that supported SYRIZA, it is obvious that you insinuate that we also supported SYRIZA. This is totally inaccurate, we never supported this social-democratic party in any kind of election. We have publicly opposed the FI for doing so, which I suppose you already know, or you should know when referring to our organization. See here:

<https://www.okde.org/index.php/en/announcements/87-announcement-s/128-letter-of-the-cc-of-okde-spartakos-to-the-bureau-of-the-fi-on-the-greek-situation>

There are other things in the article that are not correct: for example, ANTARSYA is definitely not a middle-class coalition. But this could be a matter of political interpretation upon which we can disagree. On the contrary, my above-mentioned remarks concern undoubted facts. It is a matter of honesty to restore truth about OKDE-Spartakos.

I expect you not to ignore this message, in the name of revolutionary honesty.

Comradely

Manos

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Over 1 million people have died of COVID-19, and governments and trade unions worldwide have returned students to school and workers to work in unsafe, deadly conditions. It is more than ever essential that workers and youth entering into struggle against these herd immunity policies have the unvarnished truth: not one of OKDE-

Spartakos' points have merit, and the WSWS is correct in its criticisms of the NPA, Syriza, and OKDE-Spartakos.

Significantly, OKDE-Spartakos does not even try to contest the WSWS' analysis that the NPA backed Greece's pro-austerity Syriza ("Coalition of the Radical Left") government and is blacking out Greek protests against herd immunity policies to keep them from spreading to France. It accepts these damning charges without comment. It tries only to distance itself from the NPA, asserting that it is not "quite" accurate to say it is linked to the NPA or to Syriza.

This is a clumsy trick: OKDE-Spartakos then states it is "part of the USFI," the United Secretariat tendency, a network of middle class parties of which the NPA is the French section. This constitutes a "direct link" to the NPA. Indeed, the OKDE-Spartakos website features multiple NPA statements on subjects from Greece to the COP-21 ecological summit.

The NPA's sordid record includes attacking "yellow vest" protests against social inequality as neo-fascistic, backing Syriza, and appealing to French imperialism to arm CIA-backed Libyan and Syrian "rebels." So forces like OKDE-Spartakos therefore now prefer to pose not as NPA allies but as the USFI's "left" faction, around a "Tendency for a Revolutionary International" Facebook page. However, this tendency's "Joint declaration for a revolutionary internationalist project in Europe" still promotes the NPA's record as "the anti-capitalist alternative" in France.

This shabby word-juggling and the attempts of OKDE-Spartakos to lecture the WSWS on "revolutionary honesty" aim to mask its corrupt politics.

In this global pandemic, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has stressed, great political tasks are posed to workers and youth internationally. They need safety committees independent of the unions, and a revolutionary leadership to lay the political basis for systematic mass strikes and opposition, the taking of power internationally to seize the necessary resources for a scientific, humane and socialist fight against COVID-19. This includes a shelter-at-home policy for youth and non-essential workers. The cost of inaction will be horrific losses of life.

OKDE-Spartakos is making an opposed argument, that workers do not need to break with the unions and the ruling establishment. It does not dispute the WSWS article's analysis that the unions and middle class parties are implementing the back-to-school policy because they expect that funds from trillion-euro EU pandemic bailouts will flow through bank bailouts and works councils into their stock portfolios and union coffers. Instead, OKDE-Spartakos implies that "revolutionary" faction of these bribed organizations will emerge and somehow carry out a left policy.

On this basis, it tries to channel social anger among youth behind fruitless attempts to win these organizations to a “left” line.

In the 1930s, Trotsky wrote mercilessly of centrists like Marceau Pivert in France who, by blurring the lines between revolution and reaction, worked to block the growth of a revolutionary party. Pivert, he said, “does not understand that a pitiless manner of posing the fundamental questions and a fierce polemic against vacillations are only the necessary ideological and pedagogical reflection of the implacable and cruel character of the class struggle of our time. To him it seems that this is ‘sectarianism’, lack of respect for the personality of others, etc., that is, he remains entirely on the level of petty bourgeois moralizing.”

The only thing to add is that, compared to today’s pro-imperialist petty bourgeois parties like the NPA, figures like Pivert were titans of the class struggle.

OKDE-Spartakos attacks the WWS, asserting that linking it to the NPA and to Syriza demonstrates a lack of respect for its record. It accuses the WWS of trying to “insinuate that we also supported SYRIZA. This is totally inaccurate, we never supported this social-democratic party in any kind of election.” OKDE-Spartakos then links to one of its articles rebuking the USFI central leadership for endorsing Syriza in the 2012 elections.

The WWS has no need to “insinuate” anything: the support OKDE-Spartakos gave Syriza is a matter of public record. The WWS covered the 2012 dispute. True, OKDE-Spartakos did not directly endorse Syriza “in any kind of election,” as it claims in a legalistic dodge. However, it supported Syriza by joining and promoting forces claiming to be on Syriza’s left—the Antarsya coalition—that would support Syriza even though they claimed to distrust its pro-capitalist politics.

Indeed, in the link it sent the WWS, OKDE-Spartakos said it had “taken the political decision to participate in the unitarian anti-capitalist left project of ANTARSYA,” and that “ANTARSYA met SYRIZA and agreed to cooperate and march together in the struggles.” It did not raise that Syriza was in struggle *against* the working class.

OKDE-Spartakos called for a “united front” with Syriza. In its 2012 document, it wrote: “We think it is crucial for the Greek anti-capitalist left and particularly for ANTARSYA to go on with a united front tactic, but at the same time it should preserve its political independence and the anti-capitalist transitional program by which it has carried out difficult struggles in trade unions, workplaces and among the youth.”

OKDE-Spartakos reported that Syriza drafted its 2012 platform together with right-wing parties including New Democracy and the far-right Independent Greeks. It speculated that “after some months a possible SYRIZA government will collapse leaving an open field for a right-wing government.” Nonetheless, it insisted that building another force, that would pose as a left critic of Syriza but ally with it, was the “only hope.” While it claimed to be fighting for “its political independence,” it was in fact allying with a bourgeois party.

The shattering experience of the Syriza government, which has become synonymous for millions worldwide with treachery and betrayal, exposed this reactionary strategy. Elected in 2015 based on promises to end EU austerity, Syriza obtained a massive 61 percent “no” vote on austerity in a referendum, only to implement draconian EU austerity policies and set up a chain of EU refugee detention camps in the Greek islands.

This experience vindicated the warnings of the WWS and proved

OKDE-Spartakos wrong on virtually every count. The only point where it proved correct was that Syriza was allied to the far right: Syriza set up a government coalition with the Independent Greeks. However, Syriza stayed in power for not a few months but four years, relentlessly imposing EU policies of austerity and repression. As for OKDE-Spartakos and Antarsya, far from keeping Syriza from implementing right-wing policies, they accommodated.

In line with its deal with Syriza, OKDE-Spartakos cynically hailed Syriza’s election victory in a January 26, 2015 statement as a “great defeat” for Greek capitalism. It also promoted Syriza’s July referendum on austerity—after which Syriza implemented draconian social cuts—as an event that could “open, under appropriate conditions, a new round of political crisis of the system that exploits and oppresses us.” Syriza’s betrayal disgusted workers and youth not only with Syriza, but with Antarsya and OKDE-Spartakos, who had endlessly promoted Syriza.

If OKDE-Spartakos were serious about addressing political issues, they would be discussing what conclusions to draw from the many defeats and betrayals in which they participated. Why is this trend always repeated? However, OKDE-Spartakos merely responds with dishonest, blanket denials that it has anything to do with the political treachery of its closest allies. Underlying this is the politically-liquidationist perspective and orientation of the USFI.

The USFI descends from a tendency led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel that split with the ICFI in 1953, calling to liquidate the Trotskyist movement, country by country, into Stalinist and bourgeois nationalist parties. They argued that the Trotskyist movement could not provide political leadership to the international working class and had to seek alliances with pro-capitalist forces.

These forces developed a middle class orientation based on the fusion of Stalinism with identity politics. This underlay both the NPA’s orientation to Syriza, an alliance of forces from the Stalinist Greek Communist Party and post-1968 student movements, and that of OKDE-Spartakos to Antarsya, a similar coalition of Green and Pabloite groups allied with Greek Maoist followers of French Stalinist philosopher Louis Althusser.

An international fight against the bourgeoisie’s herd immunity policy requires a ruthless break with this orientation, and a turn to the international revolutionary perspectives and the struggle for the political independence of the working class defended by the ICFI against Pabloism.



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