

How Syriza's betrayals strengthened the extreme political right in Greece

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New Democracy (ND) Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis was sworn in Monday after defeating the opposition Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left—Progressive Alliance) in a rout in Sunday's Greek general election.

As well as the right-wing ND taking office for another term, the election saw the reconsolidation in parliament of three far-right parties, which won more than 12 percent of the vote combined and 34 seats.

The election of a conservative government and the elevation of the far-right in what one analyst described as “the most conservative parliament since the restoration of Greece's democracy in 1974” is the political responsibility of Syriza.

In government between 2015 and 2019, Syriza imposed savage austerity, while loyally defending and funding Greece's key role within NATO and implementing brutal “Fortress Europe” measures against refugees on behalf of the European Union (EU). It has only deepened this agenda, demobilising and betraying the workers and youth who once looked to it for leadership.

Syriza first came to power in January 2015 in a landslide based on pledges to end the austerity measures demanded by the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but demonstrated within a few months that it was a party working solely in the service of the bourgeoisie. The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) assessed this in its statement “The Political Lessons of Syriza's Betrayal in Greece” as “an immense strategic experience for the working class.”

The ICFI had from the beginning rejected Syriza's claims and those of its numerous pseudo-left cheerleaders internationally that its election would lead to the implementation of left-wing and even socialist

policies. Based on an analysis of Syriza's class character as representative of upper-middle class strata, advancing a pro-capitalist program, the ICFI warned that it would rapidly renege on its promises and impose the austerity offensive demanded by Greece's creditors—leading to the strengthening of right-wing and fascistic forces.

In a perspective column dated January 27, 2015, “The significance of the election of Syriza in Greece,” the WSWS stated:

The International Committee of the Fourth International rejects with contempt the political excuse offered by the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left to justify support for Syriza and its pro-capitalist agenda—that a Tsipras government is a necessary “experience” for the working class, from which it will somehow come to understand the necessity for genuinely socialist policies.

Such sophistries are advanced only to oppose the emergence of a revolutionary movement of the working class, a development possible only through a relentless political exposure of Syriza. This task is undertaken by the *World Socialist Web Site* in order to prepare workers and young people for the decisive struggles they face in Greece and internationally.

In an article published the following day, “Syriza's electoral success and the pseudo-left,” the WSWS wrote:

Another of their [the pseudo-left's] arguments

is that one must support Syriza so that the working class can go through these experiences and learn from them. This is pure cynicism. Given the enormous dangers posed by a Syriza government, the task of a Marxist party is to expose the class interests represented by Syriza, to warn the working class against its consequences and provide it with a clear socialist orientation.

The ICFI's analysis of Syriza was placed in the context of the development of similar political formations internationally, including Podemos in Spain, the Left Party in Germany, the Left Bloc in Portugal and the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France.

The betrayal by Syriza set a pattern that was to be repeated beyond the borders of Greece. Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the British Labour Party in September 2015. Corbyn's declared mission was to save the Labour Party from "Pasokification"—the meltdown experienced by Greece's social democratic PASOK after it imposed the first raft of EU- and IMF-dictated austerity measures.

In his victory speech to Labour's 2016 Special Conference, Corbyn declared, "Since the crash of 2008, the demand for an alternative and an end to counter-productive austerity has led to the rise of new movements and parties in one country after another. ... In Britain, it's happened in the heart of traditional politics, in the Labour Party, which is something we should be extremely proud of."

Among the most ardent supporters of Corbyn was Syriza's former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, who had only resigned from government in July 2015 to distance himself from the austerity measures being imposed by Tsipras, which he had been instrumental in negotiating. Corbyn even employed Varoufakis as an economic adviser.

The outcome of the Corbyn "experience," four years of abject political capitulation to his right-wing opponents inside and outside the Labour Party, was a rout, with Labour, now led by Sir Keir Starmer, pledged to savage austerity and marching in lockstep with a vicious Conservative government in backing NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine.

After claiming that workers had to go through the

"experience" of governments run by Syriza and their ilk in order to arrive at socialism, not one pseudo-left tendency has ever even acknowledged that the result has instead always been a lurch to the right. Moreover, after each political betrayal, the search continues for the next Syriza—a petty-bourgeois formation employing a smattering of left-sounding phrases that can be offered up as a bogus alternative leadership for the working class.

No other conclusion can be drawn other than that the pseudo-left groups actively seek the political neutering of the working class in order to secure the privileged and comfortable existence they enjoy within capitalism.

The essential lesson to be drawn by workers and youth internationally is the necessity to build sections of the ICFI in Greece and in every country. The ICFI's writings on the pseudo-left tendencies comprise the necessary theoretical arming of workers to take forward this struggle.



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