

Jacobin, Democratic Socialists of America cover up for Syriza and prepare new betrayals

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In the aftermath of Syriza's debacle in the Greek elections on Sunday, former Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras ignominiously resigned his position as leader of the party. He declared that the so-called "Coalition of the Radical Left" is going to have to "take difficult and courageous decisions, which are called upon to serve a new vision."

Tsipras's resignation was an acknowledgement of the collapse in support for the party under his leadership, but any "new vision" will be aimed at providing a face-lift to allow Syriza to continue to serve as a critical instrument of the banks and capitalist ruling elites.

Pseudo-left groups internationally, meanwhile, are engaged in a collective effort to cover over their own criminal role in Syriza's betrayals, the better to prepare for new betrayals in the future.

Typical is an article that appeared in *Jacobin* magazine, "The Greek Left is in Serious Trouble," written by University of Bristol Professor Giorgos Gouzoulis. *Jacobin* is affiliated with the US Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a faction of the Democratic Party.

Jacobin writes that it seeks to "understand how we ended up here" in order to "offer a convincing progressive policy agenda" and a "return to power for the Left." What it presents, however, is an exercise in historical falsification.

It is necessary to review this history and how it was analyzed contemporaneously by the International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site*. Everything Syriza did was foreseeable and foreseen. (See the WSWs exhibit, "The Syriza Government in Greece: The Pseudo-Left in Power")

The first lie, upon which everything else is based, is that somehow Syriza in government represented "power for the Left." When Syriza was elected in January 2015, it was presented by *Jacobin*, the DSA and their co-thinkers throughout the world as a sea change in European and world politics. "Syriza's electoral triumph has brought hope to the European radical left and workers' movement, offering it an immense opportunity," *Jacobin* wrote on January 26, 2015, the day after Syriza's election.

It was absolutely clear, however, to anyone that based their assessment on a Marxist analysis of political tendencies and the class interests that they represent, or even read what Tsipras was saying, what Syriza was and would do. Whatever its "radical left" rhetoric, it was a bourgeois party, resting on privileged layers of the middle class, which would implement the demands of the banks.

On January 5, 2015, three weeks before the election, in an article examining Syriza's electoral program, the WSWs wrote, "The ruling class know with whom they are dealing and that they have nothing to fear from Syriza."

On January 26, 2015, the day after ~~the~~ *the* election, as proclaiming the "hope" for the "radical left," the WSWs wrote: "The electoral repudiation of the Greek capitalist class's traditional parties of rule, PASOK and ND, reflects mass outrage with austerity dictated by the banks. However, Syriza is a bourgeois party that is committed to the EU, the euro and the defense of capitalism."

According to the narrative of Gouzoulis, "After forming a coalition government on January 2015, the Syriza-led administration attempted to convince EU institutions, powerful lobbies, and the political leaders of the EU North that a progressive alternative policy agenda is possible. But these aspirations were crushed after six months of negotiations."

In fact, Syriza, its prime minister, Tsipras, and his Sancho Panza, Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, from day one began repudiating all of its electoral promises. This started with the formation of its government. *Jacobin* refers to a "coalition government," but politely declines to name with whom the coalition was formed: the Independent Greeks (Anel), a right-wing xenophobic split-off from New Democracy (ND).

As the WSWs wrote, the decision to join forces with Anel, which was entirely at Syriza's discretion, was aimed at creating "the best conditions for shifting its policy to the right, while signaling to the Greek and international bourgeoisie that its new government is no threat to their fundamental interests."

Rather than seeking to mobilize the working class in Greece and Europe, Syriza advanced a bankrupt policy of begging the EU to give it a few crumbs. Varoufakis played the lead role in kissing the behinds of the finance ministers in every European capital.

Less than a month after taking office, Syriza signed an agreement with the Eurogroup pledging that it would "refrain from any rollback" of austerity measures under the existing and hated EU-backed "Memorandum," and would "honor [Greece's] financial obligations to all their creditors fully and in a timely manner." That is, Syriza pledged to loyally implement the demands of the European banks, which it had said it would oppose.

While *Jacobin* lied at the time, claiming that "Syriza Holds its Ground," the WSWs wrote, "Even in the entire history of 'left' petty-bourgeois politics, it is difficult to find an example of deceit, cynicism and truly disgusting cowardice that quite matches that of Prime Minister Tsipras."

Syriza and Tsipras then sought to compel workers to accept their agreement with European finance capital, with force if necessary, as evident in the deployment of police against protesting students in

April.

This culminated in the fraudulent referendum on new austerity measures in July of 2015, which *Jacobin* now describes as “the last act of Syriza’s attempt to change the direction of economic policies within the Eurozone.” At the time, it published in full Tsipras’s lying speech announcing the referendum.

Syriza organized the referendum fully convinced that its effort to demoralize workers and smother opposition would produce a “yes” vote that would provide cover for implementing the demands of the banks, or even allow Tsipras to resign and hand over power to ND. In the event of a “no” vote, Tsipras made clear in advance that he would continue to negotiate with the EU on austerity measures regardless. “Were Tsipras to concisely explain to working people the content of the referendum,” the WSWS explained before the vote, “he could say: heads the EU wins, tails you lose.”

When the population voted overwhelmingly against austerity, Syriza worked to ram a massive new austerity bailout through parliament that had been explicitly repudiated. It was at that time that Varoufakis, the consummate opportunist, resigned as finance minister, sensing that he might have better opportunities for personal and political advancement by distancing himself from Tsipras.

In September 2015, Syriza narrowly won reelection against ND amid mass abstention. Syriza and Tsipras remained in power for the next four years, before being defeated in elections in 2019.

Jacobin treats, as briefly as possible, Syriza’s time at the head of government after 2015. According to Gouzoulis, this period was characterized by “limited social policies that protected poorer households,” but within the overall framework of an “economic policy... focused primarily on maintaining budget surpluses and servicing public debt payments,” which “particularly hurt the poorer segments of Greek society.”

In fact, the Syriza government, having suppressed and crushed organized opposition to austerity in 2015, brutally and systematically implemented the demands of European finance capital and the Greek ruling class. Perhaps most notoriously, it served as the front line of the EU’s ever more horrific “Fortress Europe” policy against refugees, including the establishment of what amounts to concentration camps overseen by the Greek police. At the same time, it fully supported NATO and the policies of US and European imperialism.

The Syriza government oversaw the extreme growth of social inequality and the impoverishment of masses of Greek workers and youth, with disastrous consequences. *Jacobin* refers to the train crash that killed 57 people in the final months of the last ND government, citing the impact of “disinvestment in public infrastructure and the privatization of the railways.” It neglects to mention that much of this happened under Syriza, including the selling off of Greece’s state railway, TrainOSE.

The outcome of this whole process has been, as the WSWS warned, to strengthen the political right. All those organizations that promoted and covered up for Syriza played their role, some out of stupidity, but generally with a conscious understanding and abiding hostility to the working class.

When the WSWS uses the term “pseudo-left,” emphasis should be placed on “pseudo.” There is nothing “left” about these organizations. They use the term “socialist” for one purpose only: to block the turn of the working class to genuine socialist politics. In terms of the class interests that they represent, it is privileged sections of the upper-middle class, whose wealth and outlook are tied to imperialism and Wall Street.

Having falsified the real history and lessons of Syriza in Greece, *Jacobin* makes clear that it intends to do everything it can to organize new betrayals. “Fighting austerity and privatization and defending democracy will be very difficult tasks in the Greek parliament for the next four years,” Gouzoulis concludes his article. It is necessary, he writes, to “rebuild... left-wing social movements and political organization... leading to the creation of new genuinely radical political alliances.”

Whatever organization the various remnants and split-offs from Syriza cobble together, it will be no more “radical” than Syriza itself. Its aim will be to create a new trap for workers and youth seeking a way to oppose inequality and austerity.

The DSA and *Jacobin* cover up and support Syriza because, if anything, their own policies would be to the right of those of Syriza during its time in power from 2015 to 2019. This is not a matter of speculation. DSA members voted to legalize a rail strike last year, and the DSA wholeheartedly supports the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine.

Corbyn in the UK, Sanders in the US, the Left Party in Germany, Mélenchon in France and innumerable variants throughout the world are factions of the political establishment, promoted and supported by organizations that represent not the working class, but the privileged upper-middle class. Their pro-capitalist policies are not a mistake, but the product of the social forces that they represent. As with Syriza, they serve only to strengthen the political right.

There is a growing mass movement of workers and young people throughout the world, the product of extreme levels of social inequality, the consequences of escalating imperialist wars, the growth of fascism and dictatorship, the impact of the pandemic, and all the manifestations of capitalist crisis.

The development of a genuine socialist movement in the working class, however, is not an automatic process. It requires the building of a Trotskyist party, whose cadre are educated on the basis of the lessons of history. A central element of this education is training workers and youth to expose and oppose, relentlessly and without compromise, the pseudo-left. This is the real lesson from the experience of Syriza in Greece.



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