

The political significance of Greece's massive protests and general strike for Tempi rail crash justice

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In its 2025 New Year Statement, the *World Socialist Web Site* Editorial Board argued that the first five years of this decade “have been dominated by the response of the ruling class to the capitalist crisis. The next five years will be dominated by an explosive eruption of the class struggle...”

“As humanity enters the second half of the decade, the objective conditions for socialist revolution are ripening at an extraordinary pace. The conditions created by global capitalism—imperialist war, staggering inequality, climate catastrophe and the threat of dictatorship—are driving millions of workers and young people into struggle.”

The huge movement sparked by Greece's Tempi rail crash and subsequent government cover-up are a dramatic confirmation of this analysis.

February 28 saw many hundreds of thousands take to the streets in Greece's largest-ever demonstrations, marking the second anniversary of the 2023 crash which resulted in the death of 57, mainly young, people. These demonstrations were accompanied by a general strike impacting every section of the Greek working class.

According to one estimate, at least 430,000 protested in the capital Athens and similar vast turnouts were repeated throughout Greece, including on all its islands—directly mobilising a sizable proportion of the country's 10 million population.

Of immense objective significance, moreover, the eruption of the class struggle in Greece won a global response, with demonstrations organised outside Greek embassies and other locations in over 100 cities internationally. A map co-ordinating these Tempi protests was viewed by over 1.9 million people.

The demonstrations over Tempi met particularly widespread support in Serbia, where large-scale anti-government protests have been held following the deaths last November of 15 people when a railway station canopy collapsed in the city of Novi Sad.

The specific trigger for the Greek protests is a horrific

crime of social murder, and the efforts of the sitting right-wing New Democracy (ND) government to protect the guilty.

The passenger train involved in the crash with a freight train was en route from Athens to Thessaloniki and was packed with students, many of whom died alongside 11 rail workers. It is highly likely that an illegal cargo of fuel was on board the freight train and played a large part in the number of deaths.

But the explosion of anger on Greece's streets has been generated over many years, due to the impact of savage austerity measures imposed by successive governments since 2008. Coalescing within the movement over Tempi is opposition to every attack on the working class over the last 15 years and the opposition of young people to a social and economic system which offers no future.

The conservative daily *Kathimerini* cited the political and social research analyst Angelos Seriatos, who said, “Grumbling, dissatisfaction, complaints were already broiling in the background. Three quarters of society is dissatisfied with government policies. Sometimes all it takes is a trigger for a crisis to erupt.”

Over the last 15 years the working class has tried every means to fight the offensive of the Greek and international oligarchy, particularly with the election of the Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) government in 2015, then led by Alexis Tsipras and his Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis.

Syriza pledged to oppose the austerity measures demanded by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund “troika”. This promise was betrayed, with the Syriza government imposing deeper cuts than its New Democracy predecessor, including privatising the systematically underfunded and unsafe rail network in 2017.

Then, and under every government since, the trade unions have worked might and main to suppress social opposition to

ensure the imposition of austerity.

The mass movement over Tempi developed in direct opposition to all the major parties, with demonstrations featuring banners reading “Syriza, PASOK, ND [New Democracy]—Tempi has a history”, and largely outside of the structures of the trade unions.

Greece’s main trade union federations, which together represent over 2 million workers, have hardly lifted a finger to mobilise the mass movement that erupted nationwide immediately following the crash. Only on March 16, 2023—over two weeks after the disaster—did the ADEDY public sector worker trade union federation and its private sector General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) counterpart call a token one-day general strike against a reeling ND government.

The mass protests in January and February this year were instead called by the Association of Relatives of Tempi Victims Association. On January 23 they issued a call for protests to be held on January 26, which ADEDY merely called on its members to “support” while the GSEE remained silent.

It was only on February 5 that ADEDY announced a 24-hour strike to mark the two-year anniversary of Tempi, with the GSEE following suit eight days later.

Anger over Tempi demonstrates that the working class is once again seeking to break free from the stranglehold of pro-capitalist parties and trade unions. But as the WSWs has insisted, such movements, which the bourgeoisie often describe as “leaderless”, are “only a preliminary stage in the development of the consciousness of the masses. The masses, accumulating experience in the course of struggle, are undergoing a profound change in their social and political orientation. It is in the context of this revolutionary process that the fight for socialist consciousness will develop.”

The working class in Greece has suffered devastating social attacks, chosen as the testing ground for a “scorched earth” economic agenda that was pursued by the ruling class throughout Europe. In the process, Greek workers have been subject to equally grotesque betrayals by the social democratic party PASOK—which has long ditched its previous reformist programme—and by Syriza, which was advanced by every pseudo-left formation as an alternative.

But there is nothing unique about the Greek experience. Workers in every country are under sustained attack, as the financial oligarchy and its parties demand ever more brutal exploitation and an end to all social welfare provision and essential social services to pay for military rearmament and a renewed imperialist carve-up of the world’s resources and markets.

In all the old reformist and Stalinist parties the world over,

as in Greece, workers face instruments of the class enemy that are shielded from challenge by “lefts” such as Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn and the pseudo-left groups that swarm around them.

Tempi is a portent of the mass struggles to come. To prepare themselves, the WSWs Editorial Board Statement outlined the necessary political response for workers in Greece, Europe and throughout the world:

The only viable response to the crisis confronting mankind is the revolutionary mobilization of the working class. The oligarchic character of society testifies to the urgency of the demand raised by Trotsky in the founding program of the Fourth International for the “expropriation of separate groups of capitalists.” This must be fought for through the mobilization of the working class, on a world scale, in opposition to the capitalist oligarchy.

The statement insisted that the revolution that will lay the political basis for socialism “is prepared in the course of countless struggles by the working class”, which demands the formation of new organisations of class struggle, rank-and-file committees, with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees acting as “the coordinating nerve center for global opposition to the dictates of the capitalist oligarchy.”

Above all, the statement insisted, “If there are any definitive lessons to be learned from modern history, it is that the levels of wealth inequality that now exist in the US and globally always produce social explosions. But history also demonstrates that these struggles cannot succeed without a clear program, organization and leadership.”

It concluded, “At this critical juncture, every worker and young person who seeks to oppose war, inequality and dictatorship must take action. Join the Socialist Equality Party, support the WSWs and build the International Committee of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution!”



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