

Greece: The General Election and the Greek Revolution: For a Government of the Workers' Parties!

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The Greek general election on May 6th takes place against a background of a protracted revolutionary period that has lasted several years. Time and time again, the working class and the oppressed have tried to oust the governments of Papandreou and Papademos. They have taken to the streets in their hundreds of thousands, if not millions. They have joined 24 and 48 hour mass general strikes. They have occupied Syntagma Square in Athens and the central squares of other major cities. Important sectors of the working class have taken strike action for longer periods and, over the last year in particular, a number of workplaces ? ranging from important industries like steel to hospitals and newspapers ? have been occupied, some of them have been run under workers' control. In a number of districts, ?neighbourhood committees and assemblies? have been set up, just as joint rank and file (basis) committees have been set up in workplaces, to organise the struggle in the communities and enterprises. However, none of these initiatives, important as they are, have been co-ordinated or generalised into more than local phenomena.

The crisis of Greek capitalism has led to a massive decline in the living conditions of the workers and the poor, but also the ?middle classes? ? ranging from petit-bourgeois producers like farmers and fishermen ? to urban professionals and small entrepreneurs. During the last 3 years, the Greek economy has been in a deep slump. In 2011, GDP shrank by some 7.5 percent. Even so, the situation is set to worsen; tens of thousands of small and middle enterprises are facing bankruptcy and contracts for the building industry halved in 2011.

It has been the working class that has been hit most during the past three years. It is already paying a horrible price for the crisis of the bosses' system. According to official figures, unemployment has increased by 600,000 since the end of 2008. There are now more than one million unemployed (or 21 percent). Youth and women have been hit particularly hard. More than half of all those under 25, and 35 percent of women, have no job.

In the last period, the Greek government introduced two ?pension reforms?. These have thrown hundreds of thousands into poverty and are particularly threatening to those currently under retirement age who lose their jobs or are working on poverty wages.

At the same time, the national wage bargaining system has effectively been abolished. Public sector workers have been hit hardest. Their wages declined by about 30 percent. The minimum wage has been cut by 20 percent ? to just €580, some £470, a month. About 10 percent of the adult population have no income at all. In the wider Athens region, whose inhabitants constitute about 40 percent of the total population, there are now estimated to be 20,000 homeless and 200,000 dependent on soup kitchens.

At a time when incomes have been cut for the great majority of people, matters have been made even worse by continuing high rates of inflation. This is particularly the case in the urban centres, where many find it more and more difficult to afford their housing. Even where workers still have jobs, they are often paid late or not at all. This has been the trigger for many occupations and production under workers' control, so that the workers themselves could get some income by selling their products themselves.

In recent months, there has been a significant increase in workplace occupations. The hospital in Kilkis, a small town of 25,000, is one better known example. The staff, including doctors, nurses, workers occupied the hospital from 2 February until mid-March and operated it under workers' control. It is far from the only hospital or workplace in the country whose workers saw themselves forced to take such action; even liberal newspapers have been occupied.

Most impressively, 4,500 Greek steelworkers have been on strike for 6 months now. They are fighting against wage cuts and the scrapping of national bargaining. The action became more solid and support grew after mass sackings were announced.

In all these cases, the workers have organised regular assemblies incorporating all those working in the specific sector – skilled or unskilled, professionals or ‘ordinary’ workers. Many have elected commissions for specific tasks and representatives. In a number of cases, including the steel-workers, they also organised support committees, including women's committees of the workers' wives and partners.

On a work-place level, base organs of workers' control and workers' self-management have been set up. Although these have normally been a pragmatic response to sheer necessity, they have clearly raised and generalised the level of self-organisation and consciousness of the workers. They have added to a sense of solidarity against common enemies; the Troika, the government, the bosses.

Another feature is that, generally speaking, the local and work-place members and representatives of the unions have joined, even led, the actions while the regional leaderships wobbled. At the national level, however, the leaderships of the main federations, like GSEE and ADEDY, have rejected support for these strikes and occupations, demonstrating the treacherous role of these bureaucrats.

There are also clear weaknesses in the occupations themselves. Whilst they rightly blame ‘the system’ for the misery, they are nevertheless often conducted as purely economic struggles. There are few attempts, if any, to build regional and national links between them and with the mass movements. Such steps, however, are essential, not only to strengthen the workers against individual employers but precisely to fight ‘the system’ as a whole. The emerging organs of struggle and self-organisation need to become the organising centres of the working class as a whole. They need to become workers' councils that can challenge the existing class power of the capitalists and their state.

The need for such a direction is clearly shown by the realities of the struggles and the occupations themselves. Ultimately, they will not be able to achieve their goals on a work-place level. A political struggle to expropriate their owners and to reorganise work in accordance with an emergency plan under workers' control is necessary – a struggle, which directs the working class to take power in society through its own organisations.

Nonetheless, whilst the urgent needs of their own struggles pushes workers, especially the most active and advanced, in this direction, that is not enough to lead them, spontaneously, to a strategy and tactics, in a word, a programme, that can guide them in the inevitable battles with the state and international agencies that will oppose them.

Despite the decline of the established governmental parties and their obvious inability to resolve the crisis of Greek capitalism, the main obstacle facing the Greek workers is their lack of a political leadership committed to linking the workers' immediate struggles to the overthrow of capitalism itself. This crisis of leadership weakens every aspect of the spontaneous struggle to defend the workers' interests.

The large trade unions federations clearly oppose any generalisation of the struggles. They have repeatedly resisted all calls for indefinite general strikes and tried to limit all such actions to one or two days of protests. Likewise, DIMAR, SYRIZA and the KKE all reject revolutionary methods of struggle with which the working class could take power by a general strike, the creation of workers' councils and breaking up the power of the state. For their part, the anarchists and autonomists have rejected any need for centralising the struggles through democratic, accountable organisations. While the 'far left', Maoist or Trotskyist groups, have played an important role in the mobilisations, they too have failed to develop a consistent strategy and tactics that could break the workers from their reformist leaders and mobilise them for the revolutionary overthrow of the system.

The crisis of the system

It is clear that this situation of mass mobilisation, spontaneous radicalisation and social decline cannot continue for very long. Whilst the masses are united around a rejection of the cuts and austerity packages, against the imposition of the programmes forced upon the Greek people by the EU, the IMF and the ECB, they lack a clear perspective, a positive programme, a plan of action - what to fight for.

Under the impact of mass actions, the Papandreou government eventually resigned. Although he briefly toyed with the idea of a referendum on the EU-imposed austerity programme, he quickly backed down when his masters in Berlin and Paris threatened to let Athens go bankrupt. In his place, those masters imposed a government of 'experts' under Papademos.

This 'model', soon followed by the installation of the Monti-government in Italy, marked an important shift to a government more directly tied to European finance capital via the EU institutions. Of course, the Papandreou government had already been under strict EU control, but the scale of popular anger and opposition to its policies had led to an undermining of its parliamentary support. This loss of legitimacy made it unviable as a government.

Papademos, like Monti, was able to base his technocratic government on a broad parliamentary majority, giving it a 'democratic' façade. However, whilst the resignation of Berlusconi was met with sympathy by the working class, and this gave a certain credibility to the popular frontist Monti-government, Papademos' huge parliamentary majority never reflected the 'will of the people' in any sense.

On the contrary, it was rightly seen as a way to by-pass even bourgeois-democratic institutions. It revealed the close ties of the mainstream bourgeois parties, the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK, and New Democracy, ND, to the Greek capitalist class and imperialism. It confirmed that they only represented a shrinking minority of the population. This was why the far-right, semi-fascist, Popular Orthodox Rally, LAOS, rapidly decamped from the government, trying to present itself as a patriotic and nationalist movement for all Greeks.

The inevitable decline and defections from PASOK and from ND in recent months are not just the desertions of cowardly parliamentarians who leave sinking ships. They also reflect an inner crisis of the ruling class. It is more and more difficult to secure 'democratic' mandates for savage cuts. The mainstream, centre parties lose in such situations because not only the millions, who are victims of their measures, but also the ruling class and international finance capital get more and more doubtful of their

ability to deliver.

On the other hand, the Greek capitalists, the banks, the remaining large monopolies like the shipping-companies, are not only closely tied to global finance capital and markets. They also see the imposition of austerity programmes by the EU/IMF as a way to shift the blame for the suffering of the people. The 'patriotic' Greek banks, for example, try to hide the fact that they have been speculating against Greek state bonds themselves. The large Greek ship-owners threaten to run their fleets under foreign flags if their profits are threatened by tax increases whilst, in the meantime, they happily take advantage of cuts in workers' wages. All of them are lobbying against any meaningful measures that would hit their profits or their wealth.

Greece is not only an opportunity for the speculators, finance houses and banks who were bailed out in the global crisis and now gamble on state bonds and currencies. Even more importantly, it is a testing ground for the re-ordering of the EU and the Euro-zone under German imperialism's hegemony. That is why the European institutions have forced through savage measures that actually deepened the economic and social crisis in Greece. The intention is not only to reinforce the status of the Greek state and Greek capitalism as a subservient semi-colony, but also to test a policy that could then be adapted to the whole of southern Europe.

This is why the EU, the ECB and the IMF will not make any concessions to the Greek people. A 'review' of the debts, a moratorium on payments, such as some reformists dream about, is simply not on the agenda. On the contrary, the EU will insist on savage measures in order to demonstrate to the working class and the poorer strata of the whole region that they will face similar attacks. Likewise, a return to the drachma, should any Greek government resort to that, would be met by a massive and concerted international attack on the Greek economy. The EU and ECB would be prepared to do everything in their power to ensure that this illusory, nationalist project ended in a fiasco in order to 'prove' that, while life might be terrible under its rule, it would be even worse outside.

Finally, it is also clear that, if a 'democratic' government fails, the EU and the Greek ruling class will be ready to resort to an authoritarian solution, no doubt combined with a massive demagogic, populist and racist campaign against migrants. The fate of the Greek class struggle and revolution is thus tied to the fate of the European project and, likewise, to the European working class' struggles against the cuts, the bail-outs and for its own, socialist alternative to a European capitalist unification under Franco-German imperialist rule.

The forthcoming elections are intended to secure a 'democratic' mandate for the continuation of Papademos' policies. It is far from certain that they will achieve this. PASOK, having held a majority of deputies and more than 40 percent of the votes after the last elections, is likely to be cut to pieces. Polls show it between 8 and 15 percent.

ND is likely to become the largest party, with just over 20 percent. Even given the fact that the Greek electoral system includes a 3 percent threshold and strongly favours the larger parties in the 2nd or 3rd round, this may well be too little for a re-run of the coalition between ND and PASOK. This looks likely to be the case even if they win the support of smaller and disaffected parties like the Greens or parties which decamped from ND or PASOK in the last period.

Both parties have lost and will lose massively to the left and the right. Over the last period, the far-right has definitely grown. When LAOS left the government, they did so in order to present themselves as the 'popular', far-right alternative to the EU, the 'plutocracy' and to the 'chaos' and 'violence' of the left. This move has not yet benefited LAOS as much as they hoped. They have been hit by defections by ND

leaders and 'popular figures' from the right wing who have founded their 'own' parties. For example, a right wing split from ND, 'Independent Greece' has been polling between 8.5 and 11 percent while LAOS and the fascist 'Chrysi Avgi' are around 4 percent.

The far right is not only marked by an 'anti-European' stance, but also by the aggressively racist, anti-immigration character of its campaign. For some years, migrants have been a constant target of racist attacks. The far-right parties scapegoat the migrant workers on the streets and demand even tougher racist controls. Whilst one or another of these parties (or deputies) may well be bought off by a new, bourgeois government implementing anti-working class policies and the dictates of the Troika, they will demand their racist demands be implemented.

The question of power

Until now, however, the workers, the youth, the poor have been looking for a solution on the left of the political spectrum. Indeed, the growing number of occupations and strikes, the building of base structures of workers' control and self-organisation, actually point to the creation of organisational forms, which, if generalised, could become workers' councils. This mood is also expressed in the growth of support for the left parties.

Between them, KKE, SYRIZA and DIMAR, the 'Democratic Left', a right wing split from SYRIZA from June 2010, which has won over a number of disaffected PASOK deputies and members, have been polling between 30 and 40 percent. Antarsya has about 1 percent in the polls. The ruling class, the EU, the imperialists and the bourgeois press paint up the danger of a 'left government', which would not follow the 'agreements' with the EU in toto or would push to 're-negotiate'. Even the latter is considered 'intolerable' by the Merkels and Sarkozys.

What they fear, however, is not so much the politics of the left parties, which have been unable to provide leadership or a coherent strategy against the government and EU-plans, let alone give a clear answer to the question of power. Their real fear is the enormous expectations and social pressure that the left parties and their deputies would come under if they were to win a majority, or even just be the biggest grouping, in parliament and were able to form a government.

Whilst the Greek and European ruling classes view the widespread, and growing, support for the left with deep concern, the left parties themselves seem to be puzzled and confused by the prospect of an electoral victory.

SYRIZA

The leader of SYRIZA has called on the other left parties 'KKE and DIMAR in particular' to form a government of the left in the event of an electoral victory. Although this is a real prospect, the call has been met with a mixture of silence and wavering by DIMAR and outright rejection by KKE and Antarsya. In fact, SYRIZA's proposal, as much as the responses, reveals the deep political mistakes of the Greek left and the depth of the crisis of leadership that the working class faces.

According to the opinion polls, SYRIZA has seen a rise in its popular support recently. This is despite internal divisions that have already led to the exit of Kokkino (the CWI section) and are expected to see the loss of the Maoist KOE. The combined effect has been to leave SYRIZA much more clearly 'Synaspismos plus' that is, it is more clearly dominated by the former Euro-Communists, who are now members of the European Left Party.

SYRIZA's deputies have rightly voted against the cuts and the Troika programme over the last months

and the party proposes to repeal these measures. It calls for a moratorium on the debt payments while they are reviewed and for repayment to be halted until the economy is back on a growth track. In short, SYRIZA, more precisely the Synaspismos leadership, wants to renegotiate the debts and the whole moratorium. It wants to avoid a return to the drachma but, on other hand, also wants some concessions from the Euro-powers. It is clear that such a strategy cannot work. It would result in a governmental policy, which would oscillate between the demands from the working class and the poor and those from the capitalists and imperialism.

Most importantly, the 'anti-austerity' and 'anti-neoliberal' government conceived and proposed by SYRIZA would not touch the foundations of Greek capitalism. It does not even call for the expropriation and nationalisation of large scale monopoly capital. Unsurprisingly for a reformist party, it has a purely parliamentary conception of such an 'anti-austerity government'. SYRIZA presents the bourgeois state apparatus, which has served numerous Greek capitalist governments so well and which is tied by a thousand threads to the ruling class and imperialism, as a tool which could be used by a 'left government' for its own purposes. It has no strategy, no plan, for how to respond to the inevitable sabotage and overt attacks by the ruling class and the EU/ECB/IMF if even the slightest attempt were made to stop following the demands of the Troika.

Response from DIMAR (Democratic Left)

DIMAR has been reluctant to respond. This is not entirely surprising because, although the proposal itself is not so different from their own policy, DIMAR originated in a right wing split from SYRIZA in June 2010, when 550 members of Synaspismos and 4 deputies broke from the party because of its supposed 'sectarianism' towards the PASOK-government. What they actually wanted was to ally with Papandreu in an attempt to push his government to the left in the negotiations with the EU and ECB!

In addition, DIMAR always made it a key point of its politics and programme that Greece should stay in the EU and Eurozone. Therefore, it is in favour of 'renegotiating' the terms of the Troika, rather than breaking with them altogether.

DIMAR has recently grown. The reason for this is that they were able to win over much larger sections from PASOK, in particular former leaders, parliamentarians and trade union bureaucrats, than any other left party (even though Synaspismos also won some). DIMAR clearly hopes that it can increase its influence amongst layers previously controlled by PASOK, in particular in the unions, but it does not want to sever all ties to PASOK and in particular to those trade union bureaucrats still loyal it. This is why it does not want to bind itself to an alliance with SYRIZA and, even less, with the KKE. In the end, it would prefer a pact with a 'reformed' PASOK and other centre-left parties (possibly including SYRIZA) rather than a 'left government'.

The KKE

The KKE has rejected any call for, and future participation in, any left or 'anti-austerity' government outright. This is because they recognise that any such government would, in reality, be run by 'opportunists', it would be a fake-left government, essentially pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist. In order to back this position, the KKE raises some correct criticisms, especially the refusal of DIMAR and SYRIZA to call for the cancellation of the debts and to pledge themselves to stop paying them immediately.

However, what is the KKE's alternative? It is fine to reject forming governments with opportunists 'but didn't the KKE form a so-called 'anti-corruption' government with ND in the early 1990s? Likewise, it is good of the KKE to point out that SYRIZA's 'anti-austerity' government would still be a bourgeois government, resting on capitalist property relations. But what about the KKE's demand for 'patriotic

government?, for which it campaigned for years? Such a government would also still be based on the bourgeois state apparatus and private property relations. Only the monopolistic parts of capital were to be eliminated. The government the KKE argued for was called ?patriotic? for a good reason. It was to include not only the ?revolutionary? workers from KKE/PAME but also the ?honest?, patriotic petit-bourgeois and bourgeois, a government of parties representing antagonistic classes, a popular front.

The KKE presents such a strategy, which goes back to social-democratic reformism long ago and was taken over and codified by Stalinism in the 1930s, as a necessary stage to advance to socialism. In reality, it is the opposite. It is an obstacle to socialism, since it can only be carried out if the ?patriotic? bourgeoisie remains in control of the state and society, if such a government defends capitalism.

This fundamentally opportunist and counter-revolutionary strategy that the KKE advocates is not qualitatively different from the policies of SYRIZA, even if it is camouflaged behind red flags and daily praise of socialism. The KKE has always campaigned for leaving the Euro and the EU. More recently, it has shifted a bit to the left on this, realising ?suddenly? that under capitalist relations the re-introduction of the drachma would lead to an even more rapid decline in workers' living standards under the impact of massive inflation.

In similar vein, the KKE has replaced its call for a ?patriotic? government with the call for a ?popular government?, a more left wing version of the popular front, a government which would rest somewhere between capitalism and socialism at an ?anti-monopolistic stage?. Moreover, the KKE knows full well that there is no potential ally with whom to form this ?popular government?. In reality, if it does reject the call for an ?anti-austerity government?, it will simply end up as an opposition party.

The ?principled? and, indeed, not so principled, objections of the KKE are mainly directed to its own followers, to whom it presents itself as the ?clean? popular alternative. However, since it cannot possibly form its ?popular government?, the supposedly left objections come down to presenting an imaginary popular front as an alternative to joining with the other reformist parties against the open bourgeois parties. Here, popular frontist opportunism turns into the sectarianism that the KKE has demonstrated over years towards the whole Greek left by organising its own demonstrations rather than joint actions. The same sectarianism is also demonstrated by the KKE's attitude towards the building of co-ordinations of struggle based on representatives from workplaces and estates, since these would inevitably require a united front policy towards the ?opportunists?.

How to respond to the call from SYRIZA

For all those supporters who may have doubts about the KKE strategy, or want unity of the workers' organisations, the KKE has an optimistic message. ?A weak government means a strong people?. Here, the whole policy turns into almost criminal, complacent passivity. Whoever forms the government, it will be weak, the KKE assures us, as long as the people continue to march and strengthen the Stalinist party.

But wasn't the Papandreou government also weak? And Papademos? Weren't they met by mass mobilisations? But didn't they succeed in impoverishing the masses? Does the KKE really think that such a situation can be continued? Or isn't there the acute danger that the revolutionary conditions will pass, will decay and turn into their opposite ? a counter-revolutionary re-stabilisation?

In the current period, when the question of power is posed, the KKE's answer to the government question is one of passivity. Not only does the KKE not have a revolutionary or ?communist? alternative to the other reformist parties. Its posturing also plays into the hands of the leaderships of SYRIZA and DIMAR, as well as the trade union leaders, whether they still stick to PASOK, have become ?neutral?, or are allied to

DIMAR or SYRIZA.

DIMAR and its leaders are more than happy if they can leave rejection of a 'left government' a coalition of the reformist, bourgeois workers' parties, to KKE. Then they don't need to explain their own objections from the right. In similar vein, SYRIZA and its leadership can blame the KKE if no 'anti-austerity government' comes into existence. They can continue to present their reformist solution to the crisis of Greek society, their conception of an 'anti-neoliberal' government, without ever being put to the test, let alone being forced by the mass movement to implement more radical demands.

The far left?

The truth is that the SYRIZA leadership's proposal does at least address a real problem raised by the election and the situation, the question of government. This is a problem not only the KKE but also the 'far left' has failed to address.

The autonomists and libertarians prove their complete lack of understanding, their complete uselessness, by simply dismissing the elections altogether as 'not changing anything?', even if not a few of them may in the end vote for SYRIZA.

Amongst the centrist left, Kikkino (the CWI section) is the only organisation in Greece, apart from SYRIZA, which calls for a workers' government formed of KKE, SYRIZA and DIMAR and 'based on a socialist programme?'. Kikkino claims this could even have a parliamentary majority, if the parties were to stand together as one list, since the strongest party in parliament gets an extra 40 votes. Kikkino raises a number of correct demands like the nationalisation of the banks and large industries under democratic control of the workers and people and the cancellation of the debt payments.

Whilst the CWI is correct in calling on the reformist, bourgeois workers' parties to take governmental power if they can, they are wrong to suggest that the reformist parties could carry out a 'socialist programme?'. Moreover, their call lacks any demands or proposals related to the kinds of organisations such a government would have to base itself on in order to resist the inevitable attacks from capital.

The CWI presents its workers' government as one which could push through a socialist transformation of society without breaking up and smashing the bourgeois state apparatus, without disarming the counter-revolution and arming the workers and poor, without extending the work place and estate assemblies into councils and centralising them, without those councils breaking up and replacing the state apparatus.

Antarsya

Like the CWI, Antarsya raises a number of demands which are key for the current situation and mark a big difference from the reformist parties:

- ?- The immediate scrapping of the loan agreement, all memoranda and associated measures.
- Renunciation of the debt, cancellation of all repayments.
- The break with the system and decoupling from the euro and European Union.
- The nationalisation of the banks and large-scale enterprises without compensation under workers' control.
- The immediate increase of wages and pensions! The cancellation of individual taxes and increased taxation of capital.
- The prohibition of redundancies coupled with full security for the unemployed. The shortening of the working week and lowering of the pensionable age.
- ? The expropriation of hundreds of closed factories and their reopening under workers' control.

- Cheap and high-quality food from the agricultural cooperatives, the poor and middle farmers without middlemen and large-scale producers.?

But it has no clear response to the governmental question.

Being afraid of the danger of opportunism, not only the KKE, but also Antarsya (including the SWP-sister organisation and OKDE-Spartacos) have ruled out any participation in government and have not developed any tactics towards the left parties ? even if they had a majority in government. It warns against illusions in a ?left government?.

At the same time, Antarsya argues the need to direct the struggle towards the overthrow of the government and an insurrection, ?a fighting front to break with the system and for a strong, class struggle, anti-capitalist left?. It calls repeatedly for a ?broad? front against the government and the cuts by the whole workers' movement ? including SYRIZA and KKE.

It is absolutely correct of Antarsya, despite its many other weaknesses and faults, to call on the workers' organisations to join in struggle, to campaign for a united front against the current and coming attacks. However, it is wrong and, indeed, self-defeating, not to address the very real possibility of the left gaining a majority in parliament or being able to form a minority government. If the united front with reformists, with opportunists, is permissible in the struggle against cuts and against the government, why should it be impermissible with regard to the governmental question?

Antarsya, and the other organisations on the Greek left who want to build a revolutionary alternative to the reformists, need a courageous and clear policy to address this issue ? without falling into opportunist errors. If the reformists are able to govern, revolutionaries need to demand that they govern without the parties of the bourgeoisie. They need to demand that they implement the key demands of the working class movement and all those under attack by the government.

This must not be confused with giving any political support to the reformist strategy of the SYRIZA, KKE or DIMAR. Revolutionaries certainly need to warn against the concessions the reformists will want to make. They must not sow any illusions in left governments or suggest that these parties can implement consistent revolutionary politics.

None of this alters the fact that these parties represent a large part of the Greek working class and oppressed. Indeed, they represent the vast majority of them, in particular the most active and fighting sections, their rise in the polls would be inconceivable otherwise. They are the leadership of the working class and, in order to win the workers to its own programme, to the struggle for nationalisation under workers' control, for example, Antarsya and the other far left forces need to develop tactics that recognise this fact, if they are to break these workers from their current leaders.

As we have shown above, the programmes of these parties are completely incapable of providing an answer for the working class. DIMAR prefers a collaboration with PASOK as long as the political price is right. SYRIZA/Synaspismos wants a reformist government, based on the institutions of the corrupt Greek state and in agreement with the EU and Troika. The KKE poses as ?the alternative? which just needs to grow into a parliamentary force able to impose ?popular power? by constitutional means. In the meantime, it blocks any joint struggle by the whole movement.

Despite the opportunist and disastrous strategies of these parties, the workers and the masses have been moving towards them. Why? They have been active in the mobilisations of the last years and have led important parts of them. Unlike all the other parliamentary parties, they have voted against the cuts and

against the dictates of the Troika. Whilst the radical left understands, more or less, the weaknesses of the reformist programmes and strategies, the workers have not yet seen through them. Finally, for the mass of the workers, the elections are a means to oust the current government and to prevent the return of the coalition or even a government including the far right.

So the Greek workers and poor expect from the left parties that they will fight to prevent this and, if elected, will not simply hand over governmental power to ND, PASOK and others. Of course, Antarsya is right to warn against illusions in the left parties, but the working class has these hopes and it demands with justification from ?its? parties that they take government power when they can. Revolutionaries should welcome this, it will expose them and put them to the test ? a test the reformists themselves fear, as we can see in the case of DIMAR and KKE, who prefer not to be pushed into such a government.

Therefore, the call for such a government has to be combined with putting clear demands on those parties and calling on them to base themselves on the fighting organisations of the working class and the masses, such as action committees in the workplaces and estates, and to co-ordinate and centralise them at local, regional and national levels. The organisations created by the steel workers and other occupations, the neighbourhood assemblies and other forms of struggle created by the movement already provide a basis for the building of such a centralisation of workers' councils.

This would be even more important if the ?left? parties only secured a relative majority in parliament. In that situation, we should demand that they govern as a minority government, a government which, if it wanted to fulfil its promises and implement its own programme, would need to base itself on the support of those mass-based organisations. Equally, that would allow their working class supporters not only to experience ?their? parties in government, but also to develop their own organisations, which could eventually smash and replace the bourgeois state apparatus.

Other outcomes

Whether or not such a government comes into being will depend on the outcome of the elections and the pressure of the masses on the reformist parties. Given the politics of KKE, SYRIZA and DIMAR it is unlikely, even if they could secure a majority. The more likely outcome is that Greek workers will be faced with a government continuing the offensive on behalf of the Troika and the Greek capitalists ? and therefore with a new round of attacks and struggles and the need for an effective fight-back.

They will need to respond to the ongoing attacks by generalising the resistance around an action programme including demands:

Cancellation of debts, stop the IMF EU dictates! Cancel the debts of the local governments!

Scrapping of all anti-working class laws and measures like the attacks on national bargaining and the minimum wage, new mass taxation and mass lay-offs!

Open the books of all companies, all contracts and transactions of the banks and the state, progressive taxation of the rich and wealthy, an end to taxation of the masses!

Price control committees for food, housing and other essentials in order to counter price rises. For a sliding scale of wages and welfare benefits!

For a minimum wage, minimum pension, free access to education, school, universities and health services!

Measures to defend the petty bourgeois farmers and fishermen from ruin, including cheap credit at the

same time as securing the rights of workers in all firms which employ wage labour!

Expropriation of the banks without compensation and of the imperialist investors, big industry and the big landlords. Nationalisation of all closed work places and reinstatement of their workforces under workers' control.

For a central bank under workers' control! For democratic planning of large-scale industry and a programme of public works under workers' control in order to get the economy back on its feet, distribute work amongst all available workers in order to end the scourge of unemployment.

To implement such measures, however, would need a workers' government. This could only be brought about by a mass general strike to bring down the government and would need to be based on the councils and self-defence organs.

It would need to disarm the counter-revolution, the police and secret service, break up the control of the high command of the army via soldiers' councils and arm the workers and the masses in a workers' and popular militia to defend itself against the inevitable counter-revolutionary attacks from within Greece and from the EU.

Whilst such a government could begin a socialist transformation of the Greek economy and society, it would need to internationalise the struggle from day one. Building socialism in one country is impossible, as the history and collapse of Stalinism demonstrated. In Greece, it could only end in a reactionary trauma. But a Greek revolution would have massive effect on Europe. It would shake the imperialist and capitalist union more than any economic crisis, since it would put the European socialist revolution on the agenda. It would demonstrate to the workers in Italy, Spain and Portugal, as well as those in the stronger imperialist states, that the workers can win, that they can reorganise the economy and society in a rational way.

Such a struggle has to be prepared today. Not only in Greece, but throughout Europe, by solidarity action with the Greek workers, by organising joint, European-wide resistance against cuts and the dictates of the EU ? and by raising the struggle for a United Socialist States of Europe as the only viable and lasting solution to the crisis of European capitalism.

However, to fight for such a programme, a revolutionary organisation, a party of the vanguard of the class is needed ? in Greece and internationally. The Greek left in Antarsya, on the left wing of SYRIZA and outside both has an enormous responsibility. It needs to overcome its weaknesses and divisions by taking the initiative to forge a revolutionary party, based on a clear programme for working class power, which can respond to the tactical needs to break the leadership of the trade union bureaucrats and reformists. We ? the League for the Fifth International ? want to contribute to this task.

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