

The collapse of the Greek government

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The collapse Monday of Prime Minister Antonis Samaras' coalition government marks a new stage in the crisis of class rule in Greece.

The parliament's refusal to endorse Samaras' presidential candidate, Stavros Dimas, bringing down the government and forcing a new general election, is bound up with an attempt to forge a new political set-up to allow the ruling class to continue with austerity in Greece and across Europe.

Years of brutal austerity measures—demanded by the “troika” of the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank—have thrown Greek workers into poverty and unemployment, while deepening the economic crisis that has devastated the country. The economy has contracted by 25 percent, millions have lost health care, wages have been cut by 30 percent or more, homelessness and preventable diseases are rapidly spreading, and six in ten young Greeks are jobless.

Every attempt by workers and youth to oppose the assault on their jobs and living conditions has been betrayed or repressed. The traditional parties of bourgeois rule are deeply discredited. Samaras' New Democracy and the social democratic PASOK are despised in the eyes of the vast majority of the population.

It is under these conditions that the ruling class is turning to SYRIZA, the “Coalition of the Radical Left,” in an effort to head off a revolutionary crisis.

Among workers and youth in Greece, there is clearly hope that SYRIZA—which has been promoted and promotes itself as an “anti-austerity,” even “socialist” party—will offer some way out. The party won European elections in May and is currently leading in the polls on the parliamentary election to take place next month. SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras reacted to the government's collapse by promising, “In a few days, austerity bailouts will be a thing of the past.”

If one were to judge by reading the press of SYRIZA's allies internationally, the prospect of Tsipras becoming prime minister is tantamount to the second coming of

Lenin. France's Stalinist daily *L'Humanité* enthused that “Greek voters are close to an anti-austerity turn,” while Germany's *Junge Welt* wrote, “Now for the first time, the Greeks can elect a party to the summit of the state that really deserves the label ‘politically left.’”

Nothing could be further from the truth. SYRIZA and Tsipras have been carefully groomed to take a leading role in defending capitalism in Greece, ensuring that the dictates of international capital are carried through and countering the wave of popular opposition that threatens to spread throughout Europe.

In the five years since the outbreak of the euro crisis, the affluent middle class forces that control SYRIZA have been integrated into Greek bourgeois politics, with some of their representatives elevated to prominent positions in the state. The party has repeatedly stressed its commitment to the European Union and sought to emphasize its “business-friendly” and pro-capitalist program.

Earlier this year, Tsipras urged the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises to develop a “functional institutional relationship” with the “radical left” party. In an interview with Reuters in December, he denounced the “fear-mongering” over SYRIZA's supposed radical agenda, declaring, “A SYRIZA victory will break the bad spell and liberate the markets. It will create a feeling of security.” He pledged to negotiate with the “troika” and reach an accommodation with the European banks.

As for international policy, Tsipras, an admirer of the bank bailouts overseen by President Barack Obama in the United States, traveled to Washington in June 2013 for meetings at the Brookings Institution think tank. He also made trips to consult with political and financial figures in Berlin, London and Paris.

The *New York Times* opined at the time that “Only SYRIZA Can Save Greece.” If SYRIZA took office, it wrote, “nothing vital would change for the United States. Syriza doesn't intend to leave NATO or close American military bases.”

The *Times* concluded that SYRIZA's proposal to

restructure Greek debt would be good for the banks: “Banks and hedge funds know that most Greek debt is held by European taxpayers and by the European Central Bank, and what’s left is being snapped up by investors because they know it will be paid.”

The central challenge facing the European working class is to comprehend the magnitude of the political tasks it faces. While there is explosive social discontent, the pressing need is to build a new political leadership based on a revolutionary program.

What is driving the frenzied policy of the European bourgeoisie and the collapse of the old political equilibrium is the historic failure of European capitalism. The ruling class is determined to resolve this crisis through a massive redistribution of wealth from the working class to the corporate and financial elite.

Greece itself is the spearhead of a European-wide social counterrevolution. As similar measures have been imposed from Spain to Ireland, the political institutions of the ruling class have proven utterly impervious to attempts to shift government policy.

Nothing can be resolved within the framework of a global economic system in which every decision and every government is subordinated to the interests of the giant banks and corporations—a system that SYRIZA, no less than New Democracy and PASOK, defends unconditionally.

The way forward is a struggle to unify workers across Europe around a program to take power and replace the existing political institutions, including the European Union, with a federation of workers’ states—the United Socialist States of Europe. This perspective must be carried out in opposition to all defenders of capitalism.

The waging of such a struggle is inseparable from the building of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Greece and throughout Europe.



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