

The way forward in the struggle against austerity in Greece

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The broad participation of hundreds of thousands in yesterday's one-day protest strike against austerity in Greece is a signal that the working class is seeking to fight against the European Union (EU) and the Syriza ("Coalition of the Radical Left") government.

Opposition is growing after Syriza betrayed its January election promises and trampled the landslide "no" vote in its July 5 referendum on austerity. Seamen, port workers, rail and subway workers, hospital and pharmacy workers, and teachers all followed the strike call. High school and university students also held mass marches in cities across Greece against Syriza's planned social cuts.

Syriza has absurdly postured as a supporter of a strike against its own policies, based on its long-standing alliance with the unions who called the strike.

"The demands of workers and the working mobilization in general are becoming particularly critical, which should be directed against the neo-liberal policies and extortion on the part of the economic and political centers in and outside Greece," Syriza's Labor Policy Department declared. "The fight against the extreme neo-liberal policies that are opposed to our people continues even more intensively." It pledged to fight for "housing, satisfactory salaries and pensions, health care and education for all."

What a fraud! Syriza and the EU are working together to attack all the fundamental social rights won by the working class in the 20th century. Universal health care no longer exists in Greece, and Syriza is threatening to launch mass evictions of families in arrears on their mortgages, slash minimum pensions to a miserly €392 per month and impose new cuts in education funding.

Each day brings fresh evidence that Syriza is a merciless enemy of the working class. It had declared that, as a "radical left" party, it would not use police to

attack the people. On Wednesday, however, it sent police to attack and arrest workers striking against layoffs and wage cuts at the Spider General recycling plant in Giannena. Yesterday it had police clear Athens squares of protesters waving banners that read, "No to new and old austerity memorandums."

The upsurge of social struggle against Syriza only raises with greater urgency the need for a comprehensive political and strategic reorientation of the working class. The record of the Syriza government is a stark warning that forms of social mobilization such as yesterday's one-day protest strike have failed.

Since the EU's austerity offensive began five years ago, Greek workers have held no less than 41 one-day national strikes, supposedly to pressure governments to adopt more favorable policies. These did not shift or even noticeably slow the austerity policies of successive Pasok, New Democracy and Syriza governments. Together, they have carried out the greatest attack on living standards of Greek workers since the Nazi Occupation during World War II.

After the experience of the Syriza government, it is has become clear to ever larger numbers of people that the parties that control trade union struggles—Pasok and the self-proclaimed "radical" parties like Syriza as well—back austerity. They tie the working class to Greek capitalism, which is moribund, crumbling under its debts, unable to create new jobs for millions of unemployed, and committed to its ties to the euro, the EU and NATO.

Today, the International Committee of the Fourth International is publishing a detailed statement, "The Political Lessons of Syriza's Betrayal in Greece," that elaborates the way forward for workers, youth and socialist-minded intellectuals seeking to fight against this reactionary political establishment.

Reviewing the Greek debt crisis and refuting Syriza's arguments in defense of its policies, the statement points to the historical and political significance of the exposure of Syriza as a reactionary, anti-working class party. The working class cannot defend itself from unprecedented economic crises and savage assaults from the entire ruling class by electing "left" capitalist governments.

The working class is being reminded why, in October 1917, the Russian workers were compelled to overthrow capitalism in a revolution led by the Bolshevik Party of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. There is no way forward except the revolutionary road. This requires an assault on the capitalist class, the confiscation of its wealth, the seizure of the banks and major productive forces by the working class, and the creation of workers states pursuing socialist policies across Europe and the world.

The statement also explains the political and historical basis on which to build parties in Greece and internationally to lead the working class in such revolutionary struggles. It analyzes the class gulf separating the ICFI's Trotskyist critique of Syriza from the rationalizations for Syriza's policies offered by the entire international fraternity of petty-bourgeois parties and anti-Marxist academics sympathetic to Syriza.

These political forces hailed Syriza, falsely predicted that its election would be a great step forward against austerity, and reacted with indifference to its attacks on the working class. Their outlook, rooted in their privileged class interests, found its most virulent expression in the irrationalist, "post-Marxist" proclamations of the late professor Ernesto Laclau, whose insistence that the working class was finished as a political force was enormously influential inside Syriza. Today, these forces stand exposed as political reactionaries, complicit in Syriza's attacks on the Greek people.

The ICFI alone, based on its defense of the principles and historical continuity of Trotskyism, opposed Syriza and warned that it would attack the workers. The statement summarizes the ICFI's analysis of the evolution of Syriza's various Stalinist and ex-student radical factions into pro-capitalist parties at the time of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. Such analyses allowed the ICFI to make unique and farsighted warnings about Syriza, which stand as a

historic vindication of the decades-long struggle to defend the revolutionary perspective of Marxism.

It is on the basis of this heritage that the ICFI seeks to build new parties in Greece and around the world. We appeal to readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* in Greece and worldwide to read and discuss the statement, draw the lessons of the Syriza experience and fight to build the ICFI as the revolutionary leadership of the international working class.



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