

What is our discussion on Greece about?

Wednesday 13 June 2012, by [KLOKE Andrea](#) (Date first published: 11 May 2012).

Contents

- [The meaning of SYRIZA's \(...\)](#)
- [The necessity of the United](#)
- [For a third pole of the \(...\)](#)
- [Tactical or strategic question](#)

Tariq Ali, a well respected left intellectual and writer and a revolutionary leftist in his youth, has stated that ANTARSYA is “influenced by the CPG’s (KKE’S) sectarianism” and “refused the proposal to collaborate with SYRIZA.” We didn’t know that Tariq Ali is so “well informed” about the situation of the Greek left, but his comments obviously make it quite urgent that we, members of ANTARSYA, ask ourselves what is going on in this discussion about the election results in Greece and the prospects of the Greek left as a whole. This task becomes even more important in light of other messages we have received from abroad, among them from the British section of the Fourth International (FI), Socialist Resistance (SR), and even from the FI leadership, that call on us, OKDE, the Greek section of the FI, to support the “5 points” that SYRIZA’s leadership has suggested to DIMAR, the very right wing “left” party and split from SYRIZA, and indirectly even to PASOK and to the right-nationalist “Independent Greeks,” as a programmatic platform for a coalition government after June 17.

If we are to take these “5 points” seriously it should be clear that we are dealing with a very right-wing version of a left-bourgeois government, something that was quite commonplace for decades after WWI and WWII, when social democratic and Stalinist parties participated in “left governments” in Europe and on other continents. In all cases such “left” governments - sometimes rhetorically confused with “workers’ governments,” a formula which is used again by some in our present discussion - have led to disastrous results for the working class, the oppressed and exploited, as well as for the workers’ movement. These are the experiences starting from the social democratic government in Germany after the revolution of November 1918, continuing with the popular front governments in France and Spain in the ‘30s, the Indonesian coup of 1965, the popular front government in Chile, the Mitterand government in France with the participation of the PCF (1981-84), prime minister Jospin (1997-2002), along with the various social democratic-led governments in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Britain and other countries. Nobody should forget

The meaning of SYRIZA’s success

This is the first crucial point of this discussion: Is SYRIZA a “left centrist,” by which we mean an “almost revolutionary” formation, as some commentators suggest these days—for example due to the participation of organizations with (Mao-)Stalinist or Trotskyist origins? Or is it simply a left reformist party like the other parties of the “European Left”—Melenchon’s “Left Front” or the German party, “Die Linke,” for example? After all the propaganda we hear from abroad, from comrades and organizations with a euro-communist, Maoist or (half-) Trotskyist background (among others) about SYRIZA’s “steadfastness” against the memoranda policies and other things, we are

required to simply state that SYRIZA is nothing qualitatively different from all of the other parties of the “European Left.” This means that it is left-reformist. It is not a political formation that intends to push developments in the direction of a socialist transformation of society, nor will its coming to power move things “objectively” in this direction.

Quite the opposite is true, in fact. SYRIZA will try everything it can to keep workers’ and popular anger within the limits of capitalist society and of the bourgeois state. The few organizations of Trotskyist or Maoist origins inside SYRIZA do not have significant weight and are forced to adapt to every decision taken by the SYRIZA leadership, which is in fact the leadership of the SYN party. This is a very heavy burden—probably too heavy—for organizations that claim to be revolutionary. It’s true that the SYN party, particularly its youth association, as well as the other organizations of SYRIZA, are involved in all of the actions of the resistance movement, more or less, since 2004. But the leadership keeps the forces back; there are always reservations. So it was no surprise that SYRIZA’s principal demand during the hot phase of the October strike, for example, was “for new elections,” a demand it shared with the other big reformist party, the CPG (KKE). This is very characteristic of the attitude and the mentality of both reformist parties.

From a social or political view, the sudden rise of SYRIZA’s votes in the May elections, which will be followed by an even bigger success on June 17, is an instinctive (a left but also conservative) reflex to “improve” the system and to keep the anger and the protests within the limits of the existing (capitalist) order. There is a desire by broad layers to stop—perhaps even reverse - the memoranda policies, but at the same time to maintain the euro. This means not coming into a too-sharp conflict with the present regime in the EU. Let us explain carefully to avoid misunderstandings: Obviously, neither the Greek bourgeoisie nor the Troika are in favour of a SYRIZA government, do not want even a SYRIZA-led coalition government. The system of bourgeois rule has reached an impasse, whatever government might emerge after June 17. Yes, a SYRIZA or even a SYRIZA-led government will be better for the big struggles which will come after the elections—life and death battles, to be sure. Yes, all political forces of the left, including KKE and ANTARSYA, should support every measure of a SYRIZA-led government that will be directed against the memoranda policies and the loan treaties. ANTARSYA should try to push SYRIZA as a whole to the left.

The necessity of the United Front

A key element of such an approach is the concept of the UNITED FRONT, another question of life and death for the Greek workers’ and other movements in this terrible situation. Actually, the UNITED FRONT is a question of survival for the entire society. It means the cooperation of all parties, organizations, alliances, trade unions, formations like the “Popular Assemblies” and so many other initiatives—self-organized groups that developed during the last two years, in particular after the square occupations (Syntagma) in June of last year, one of the most heroic phases of the resistance movement so far. UNITED FRONT means united and decisive action against the common enemy wherever it is necessary: against all forms of the memoranda policies, against the wave of racism and the extremely dangerous rise of the Nazi gang “Golden Dawn” (still completely underestimated by both the KKE and the SYRIZA leadership). It means united struggles against the terror of dismissals, unemployment, of the unbearable poll taxes, for feeding the poorest and taking care of the homeless, for the defence of the health and education system, for the protection of the environment through a plan of public investments. There is no doubt that these struggles should be organized from below, by the rank and file of the movements and should be supported by the parties and organizations of the left along with everyone else.

Yes, the systematic and constant denial of such an absolutely essential UNITED FRONT by the KKE

leadership is CRIMINAL. There is no other characterization for their attitude. ANTARSYA has always (or at least usually) supported the UNITED FRONT concept both in declarations and in practice. But at the same time it is indispensable not to confuse the UNITED FRONT concept, which means “march separately but strike together,” with the question of participation in a left-bourgeois government, even when that government is led by a left-reformist party like SYRIZA. The government question in this case is certainly a question of power, but only in a very limited sense, because even with a SYRIZA or a SYRIZA-led government the real power will remain in the hands of the capitalist class, the Troika, and of the bourgeois state with its apparatus of repression fully intact. It is simply an illusion to believe that there will be any form of a “workers’ government” or workers’ power without a decisive clash with these real power structures of capitalist society. How is it possible to “forget” this simple but crucial truth? It will be impossible to get rid of this real power structure without the UNITED FRONT formations of the self-organized exploited and oppressed, without the appearance of dual power from below - centralized on a national level.

What can we say about the attitude of the SYRIZA leadership from this viewpoint, which in the final analysis is decisive for us? Unfortunately, during the last two months electoral politics have swept over public life. Streets now are quiet. SYRIZA has withdrawn from the streets, in order to persuade the ruling class that it is not a threat to social peace and stability. ANTARSYA and some groups of anarchists with their fights against the Nazis in the streets try to keep alive the spirit of resistance. The current electoral public debate in Greece does not mirror the actual balance of power between the contending social classes. It deforms and renegotiates this balance. SYRIZA, for example, by responding awkwardly and shyly in the affirmative to the urgent calls for a “national unity government,” has already moved a considerable distance to the right. It quickly becomes a substitute for the “mutated” social democracy of PASOK. During the last electoral campaign several ex-leading members of PASOK joined SYRIZA.

Can there be any doubt that SYRIZA is such a reformist party and that it is moving in a social democratic direction? Ask people in Greece themselves. Nobody will doubt it. In fact, SYRIZA’s propaganda for a “left government” in combination with “staying in the euro-zone” - which means finding some “good compromise” with Greek big capital and the Troika - was the secret of SYRIZA’s election success on May 6. Many people obviously hope that such a “left government” can achieve the “squaring of the circle,” satisfying both the needs of the ruling classes and of the exploited and oppressed. The problem is that this will not be possible. We call such hopes “parliamentary illusions.” The SYRIZA leadership itself does not hide its very moderate approach. To avoid misunderstandings it must be added that SYRIZA’s success nevertheless reflects the radicalization on a mass scale, even if in a way that is limited for now - something that is not untypical at the beginning of revolutionary processes. But it seems clear that this phase, the awakening of class conscience and of a (limited) anticapitalist stance, is unavoidable.

For a third pole of the Greek left

At the same time one should bear in mind that the development of anticapitalist and, finally, revolutionary class conscience on a mass scale will not be the “automatic” result of events but is linked to the rise of mass struggles and to the political, programmatic and ideological confrontations that will necessarily be expressed in the arguments of different and opposite political parties and formations of the left. From this point of view it will be crucial to develop the nucleus of the anticapitalist/revolutionary left, i.e. mainly ANTARSYA, to transform itself into the “third pole” of the Greek left. It is one of the main tasks of the revolutionary Marxist forces today in Greece to participate in this process, precisely because both the KKE and SYRIZA leaderships are deeply reformist, by which we mean that they are closely linked to the social and political system of

bourgeois class rule and therefore unavoidably obstacles to any revolutionary process that will appear. This (again unavoidable) struggle for hegemony within the left, between reformism and an anticapitalist/revolutionary orientation, will be decisive if our goal is for the workers and the oppressed to conquer the class hegemony in society (in a Gramscian sense). This means to develop dual power and to establish a workers' government based on the self-organization of the mass movement during the course of a revolutionary crisis.

So it is also necessary that the workers and oppressed organize themselves around real transitional demands and for an alternative democratic system, for a "true democracy," as the square occupation movement demanded last June, a democracy that must replace the rotten and corrupt system of bourgeois democracy which clearly reveals itself to be the dictatorship of the creditors, of big capital, and of the Troika. Last year we witnessed original transitional demands being adopted by broad popular layers when hundreds of thousands supported the slogan "We don't owe, we don't pay, we don't sell!" at Syntagma Square and everywhere in Greece. This meant that the demand for debt cancellation, raised only by ANTARSYA in 2010, was suddenly accepted also by KKE and, even if only partially (as we can see now), by SYRIZA, with its call for a "moratorium" and "renegotiations" with the Troika. The demand for "true democracy" undoubtedly expressed, even if in a not completely developed or totally clear way, the need to replace the bourgeois "democratic" dictatorship by the democracy of the self-organized workers and people. This will be achievable only through the overthrow of capitalist class rule. That is the road to a true workers government, to revolution and to socialism.

All this does not mean that we are indifferent towards the election results on June 17. Yes, we want to see the defeat of the right parties, the fascists and PASOK also in the parliamentary elections. But as a matter of facts there will be no "majority for the left" on June 17. The left parties, alliances and organizations (including even the dubious cases of DIMAR and the Ecological Greens) gained around 37% on May 6 whereas the hardcore right and neoliberal parties and alliances had more than 46% and PASOK, a contemptibly new-right party, more than 13%. On June 17 there will be another shift to the left but it will not be enough for a "left majority." So all the talk of some leftist organizations, mainly abroad, about a "workers' government" is without real substance.

Tactical or strategic question?

In any event, a left victory in the elections is not an end in itself but should be one step to promote class consciousness and the fighting spirit of the workers and oppressed, their understanding that the struggle for basic transitional demands—like the unconditional cancellation of the debt and the nationalization of the banks and big capital under workers' control—cannot be achieved within the framework of the imperialist project called "The European Union." It is obvious, however, that raising consciousness in this way plays no role in the approach of the SYRIZA leadership. Therefore one could say that the autonomous building of an alternative anticapitalist/revolutionary pole, mainly ANTARSYA, has priority over something that many consider to be the "correct tactical behavior" towards SYRIZA and its supporters. A tactic that would emphasize the necessity of supporting SYRIZA "critically" in the elections on June 17 would have to be based on the idea that this is the key element which will allow us, under the banner of "unity," to win broader layers, including SYRIZA voters, to a more radical attack on the fundamentals of capitalist class rule in Greece.

Even if such a tactical approach is not advocated by OKDE and ANTARSYA, everybody must admit that posing the question in this way is legitimate and reasonable. Minorities in OKDE and other organizations that participate in ANTARSYA believe that this is the correct tactic under the present circumstances, characterized by an overwhelming wave of workers' and popular support for SYRIZA.

It appears logical that everybody involved in the anticapitalist left has to weigh the necessity of strengthening our own pole against a correct and suitable tactic towards SYRIZA, the KKE, and their supporters. This should include support for every measure that a SYRIZA government might take against the memoranda policies and in any possible conflicts with big capital and the Troika.

It is true what comrade J.-Ph. Dives writes in a recent article referring to a remark in the "Transitional Program" (1938) where Trotsky states: "Is the creation of such a government [a real workers' government] by the traditional workers' organizations [social democratic and Stalinist] possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is, to say the least, highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie." One should add, of course, that since these words were written in 1938 no "left government" elected through parliamentary means has ever travelled such a road. Nevertheless, Dives leaves open the possibility that a SYRIZA government will turn left and come into open conflict with capital and the Troika. But even in this "highly improbable" case it will be a huge advantage if the anticapitalist/revolutionary pole of the Greek left develops and pushes such a government to the left.

And we also have to note that the idea of "critical support" in order to build an alternative anticapitalist/revolutionary pole is not the attitude suggested by the SR and FI leaderships, whose statements have called simply for an uncritical adaptation to the "5 point-program" offered to us by the SYRIZA leadership as the basis for a coalition government. Such a call for uncritical support of SYRIZA has nothing to do anymore with a discussion about "correct tactics" for revolutionary Marxists towards reformist parties, since the gulf that exists between a revolutionary orientation and a reformist one does not seem to exist for the SR and FI leaderships. They tend to replace the concept of building revolutionary Marxist organizations and parties, as sections of the Fourth International, with the concept of building "broad left parties." For the programmatic, political and ideological standards of the FI this is indeed something new that should be rejected by the international and by all of its sections.

Andreas Kloke, June 11, 2012
