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Greece

Echoes of the end of the campaign

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The latest opinion polls confirm a significant advance of Syriza: in the opinion poll given on TVSX today (23 January), Syriza would carry it with 36% the right 26%, the new catch-all party Potami and the Nazis being each credited with 7.5%.

However, on the one hand this comfortable advance could be reduced in the last moments, on the other hand it perhaps underestimates the final score of the Nazis of Chryssi Avgi, people hesitating to state they intend to vote for a criminal organization. Moreover, even with 36%, Syriza would lack 1 or 2 members of parliament necessary for an absolute majority, without having to negotiate with another parliamentary force.

Nevertheless, less than 2 days before the election, the trends are confirmed.

The Samaras line defeated

Except for a really bad surprise or last minute provocation, the internal troika's policy has been, we hope severely, defeated. Because Pasok, allied with Samaras, is in free fall: it is credited with 4.5%. Worse, its leader, the ultra neo-liberal Vanizelos, vice Prime Minister, is today, unashamedly and without joking, proposing to cooperate with Syriza. In this unfunny comic series, the Pasok former leader and Prime Minister George Papandreou has also done well: resigning from the party created by his father, he has just created his own group, the Movement of Democratic Socialists (KODISO), attracting many historical cadres of the PASOK. Credited with less than 3% - the minimum score to have 1 MP, he nevertheless considers himself the Bonaparte of the moment: he has just relaunched his proposal for a referendum on the memoranda, a gadget first launched in 2011 when, called on by Syriza and the KKE to organize parliamentary elections for having totally betrayed its 2009 promises, he thought up this way out, which was immediately rejected by all the Greek left. Comrades in France, influenced by 2005 referendum on the European constitutional treaty, at that time considered it mistaken that the left rejected this proposal. Papandreou is today giving the instructions for use of his proposal which leave is no doubt: this referendum must of course be agreed between the Greek government and its international creditors! The worst or the stupidest point is that Papandreou calls on the right and Samaras to give him an answer on this referendum which he is asking for just after the elections, affirming that he will be tomorrow the pivot of the political line which the new government will have to follow...

On the right: Samaras, as well as his policy choice of plunging the greek people into poverty (and want to continue, if he remains in power), Samaras seems harmed by his campaign on an extreme rightwing line. Obviously, the "red fear" effect is not enough, in spite of the incredible campaign of campaigning broadcasts highlighting the catastrophe that will occur from Sunday evening Syriza wins. Voultepsi, the spokesperson, indicates he is afraid that his children will not have milk for their breakfast Monday morning, and the former fascist activist, Vouridis, Minister of Health, states that it is out of the question to leave Greece in the hands of Syriza. A lot of bluster, which apparently does not even convince many right-wing voters, many of whom are also affected by the crisis and not very receptive to the economic recovery "success story". This choice of a campaign addressed in particular to the far-right (nazi) voters perhaps aims to recompose the Greek right wing an extreme right pole (Samaras and "former" recycled fascists like Vouridis and Georgiadis) alongside those whom the former-advisor of Samaras, Baltakos, calls "the healthy part of Chryssi Avgi", for the time being, it is producing a fracture, with a historical part of New Democracy taking its distance rather firmly, while rewriting the history of their reactionary party by describing it as "centre right". A defeat of Samaras will certainly lead to a severe internal battle!

Concerning the far right, it is better not to forget the Nazis of Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn). Although this organization, officially described as criminal, was able to campaign, it was relatively discreet, but there were still violent attacks and their bully boys had a campaign stall in front of their central headquarters, staffed by the tough guys. The score of the Nazis will be of course an important element: although the chiefs are in prison, none the reasons of their growth have disappeared, and we can fear a score higher than the estimate, with the possibility that they are the third party.... We must also pay attention to the figures in the polling stations in districts where there is a concentration of police housing, they voted in mass for these Nazis. This time, there are several soldiers among the candidates. It is remarkable that during his Thursday meeting, the only thing Tsipras said on the police was the means necessary to achieve their mission, without even mentioning the importance of "democratizing" the police, as the reformist parties used to say...

On the left, before and after the elections

On the left, the international media only mention Syriza, a classic electoralist bent of the middle-class press! Certainly, within its framework Syriza is waging a good campaign, quite similar to Papandreou's Pasok campaigns: rather general left speeches to popular public gathering many young people but also, it was striking on Thursday in Athens, many former voters of Pasok, who had not come to the meetings in the previous elections. Nevertheless, these meetings show two limits: behind the left rhetoric, the absence of precise commitments on key questions and which tomorrow will require determined mobilizations. Thus, the European Union - because today it is moderating its aggressiveness towards Greece? - was not mentioned on Thursday as responsible for the party misery and illegal measures imposed on the country, and against whose policy we must fight tomorrow through European mobilizations and not by experts' negotiations ...

Other limits notable: the Syriza meetings are big, but nothing compared to the giant Pasok meetings when it was all-powerful, and in particular less numerous than the KKE central meeting in Athens on Thursday, which was twice as big. A problem for today, and even more for tomorrow? Because the KKE leadership offers only one thing to this massive militant force: sectarianism, strengthening as the days Syriza and the rightwing are the same thing, and thus what is needed is a "popular alliance", central slogan that is never clarified other than to reinforce the KKE! In the poll quoted, the KKE would win 5,5% of the votes, whereas its goal is to become the third party. There again, the result of the vote is important: too low a score would strengthen the criticisms against the line of growing isolation that has been continuing for some years.

What the KKE counts on is widely-shared feeling on the left that Syriza is worse than Pasok of the 1980s (the 2000s are not even mentioned!), a judgement evoked this week in an article by Amélie Poinssot on Mediapart (radical French news site). But as the anticapitalist coalition Antarsya is also speaking to these workers and young people the KKE solves the difficulty by putting Antarsya on the same plan as Syriza!

This the difficulty for the Antarsya campaign: how to really get rid of the austerity policies – this is not the really the line of the Syriza leadership – while fighting in the unity – against the sectarianism of the KKE! It is very probable that the score of Antarsya in these elections – some still believe in a high score... – will be surely rather low, but the campaign is making it possible to reveal it as a national force with several thousands of rooted activists involved in the struggles. This is important for the future which, no matter what happens, will require a strengthening of the anticapitalist left, whether it is today in or outside Syriza.

Athens,

23 January 2015