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Greece

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**This interview was conducted on January 7 by Tassos Anastasiadis and Andreas Sartzekis, members of the leadership of the OKDE, Greek section of the Fourth International. It was first published in the January 8 issue of the weekly *L'Anticapitaliste*, newspaper of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) in France.**

Since the parliamentary elections are taking place in less than three weeks, last weekend several meetings took place, including the local general assemblies of Antarsya and the Central Committee of Syriza, followed by a national conference. Originally planned to last two days, this national conference concluded on Saturday evening, which caused protests. Beyond various announcements, including a series of technocratic measures on the reform of the state (without any mention of workers' control!), and while the very complex period opens many questions, the leadership of Syriza has preferred give the image of a party that speaks with one voice. To discuss this period and the perspectives, we interviewed Antonis Davanellos, a member of the leadership of DEA, one of the revolutionary components of the Left Platform of Syriza.

### **What are the key decisions of this weekend?**

The principal decision of the Central Committee and then the conference of Syriza is that the campaign will be based on the Thessaloniki programme, on questions relating to democratic gains and freedoms, as well as funding for the programme. The policy of Syriza is officially the following: a promise to abolish the memoranda and reactionary measures, refusal to apply for new loans or a new memorandum, a battle on the question of debt on a European level, linking the issue of the Greek debt to that of Italy, France, Portugal ... The only question on which there can be negotiations with the EU and the lenders is that of the debt; the removal of the memoranda and reactionary measures are subject to the decisions of a left government.

This line is clearly that of a confrontation with the domestic and international system, and I think that the leadership of Syriza will be subject to pressure to retreat and move towards a compromise with the European Union. But it is important to see that this has not happened: this weekend showed once again that Syriza as a party is a reality that no one can underestimate!

Confrontations with the left wing took place on the fact that for it, it is impossible to accept former social democrats on our lists, even if they have broken with PASOK: the core of our alliances must be with the KKE (Greek Communist Party) and Antarsya.

### **Can you recall for us the key points of the Thessaloniki programme?**

These are commitments taken publicly by Tsipras in September: to bring back wages and pensions to their level before the crisis; a return to collective bargaining agreements as they existed; a return to a minimum level of taxable income of 12,000 euros; abolition of the insupportable tax on heating oil. For the poorest popular layers, anti-crisis emergency measures such as free water and electricity, as well as a freeze on debt.

These measures are situated from the point of view of the leadership of Syriza in a conception of the re-launching of the economy that some people might call Keynesian; but I consider that their importance in the eyes of Greek society is this political message: austerity can be reversed. It is such a message, I think, that a victory for Syriza could send to the whole of Europe.

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### **What are the debates in the Left Platform?**

It puts forward three main points: first, that the political project of Syriza must be supported by a class movement from below. Next, the necessary radicalization of the programme of Syriza, insisting on the cancellation of most of the debt, the nationalization of the banks and going back on privatizations. Finally, that the only political alliances are to be sought on the left: the objective is a common front of Syriza, the KKE and Antarsya, hence the slogan of the Platform: for a left government, and not one of "national salvation", or worse "national unity"...

Moreover, there have recently appeared in Syriza other radical forces coming from the majority and focusing on the questions of democracy and the functioning of the party.

**We can read (in the newspaper *Epochi* linked to the majority of Syriza)** that the only arm of the Right is our internal divisions, and that Syriza must speak with one voice. What should we say in relation to this call to silence the oppositions on the left?

It is clear that in the present political battle, some degree of discipline is required. At the same time, we have won in Syriza the guarantee of the right of tendency, the possibility of political oppositions that on issues of primary importance must be capable of being firm.

In my opinion, it is no coincidence that over the past period, questions of discipline within Syriza correspond to a shift to the right, with declarations by cadres or members of parliament publicly arguing for the need for a compromise with the bourgeoisie, especially European. On the contrary, the platform supports the collective decision-making and functioning of the party from the bottom up. We have confidence in the rank-and-file and it can be considered that the political struggle for the orientation of Syriza is not definitively settled.

**Reading the documents of DEA or R-Project, it seems that the mass movement is enthusiastic for Syriza and its possible coming to power. Do you really think that this is the case?**

To tell the truth, the mass movement has declined in the last period, at least at the central level. Nevertheless, there are important battles in different sectors and regions. What this expresses in my opinion is that the people is provisionally placing its hopes on the vote for Syriza, but the relationship of forces has not changed: the first period of a left government will be crucial, with major struggles, strong demands and hopes that will have to be satisfied.

Thus, the character of the government of the left is an open question: it will be decided by the policies of Syriza but principally by the resistance and the struggles of the workers.

### **What role do you attribute to solidarity in Europe?**

The fight to end austerity can begin in Greece, but it will not be carried through to the end if there are no mobilizations of the major forces of the workers' movement throughout Europe. All our hope is that the political victory in Greece will be followed by a domino effect of change in Europe!

We therefore ask for the solidarity of our European comrades, who must not allow the great powers to strangle the government of the left and the workers' movement in Greece. But that can be the beginning of a global battle against barbaric austerity throughout the continent, and we know from history that this war can certainly start in a small country, but that it will be won definitively in the streets of Rome, Madrid and Paris. This is the time to act: this is the best thing that Syriza and the Greek left can expect!