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Greece

Viewpoints from the Greek left

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Below we publish two viewpoints from parts of the left in Greece on Sunday's crucial referendum - both calling for a No vote but with different appreciations of the course followed by the Syriza leadership. First from OKDE-Spartakos, Greek section of the Fourth International and second from the Red Network a left current inside Syriza.

NO! No agreement – End the negotiations

The Greek government, despite its persistent efforts, failed to win the confidence of the institutions (EU, IMF) and the favor of the hegemonic bourgeois classes of Europe. The vows of loyalty to the repayment of the debt “fully and timely” and the renunciation of unilateral actions, as well as of any measure which would be contrary to the capitalist normality, weren't enough.

SYRIZA adopted ever more measures and reforms in full accordance with the memoranda (privatizations, retirement age increases, de facto reductions in wages and pensions, increasing VAT in mass consumption products etc.). The EU and the IMF, however, along with their domestic partners in Greece, don't want just harsh measures, but they also want to destroy any hope (and illusion) reflected in the election of a government that was elected with the slogan of terminating the memoranda, even if this slogan was withdrawn the very first day after the elections.

Thus, the leadership of SYRIZA was at a dead end. Unable to sign its political death sentence, that is to say an agreement so shameful that would lead the party to the fate of the socialdemocratic PASOK of George Papandreu, and under the pressure of the demands of the workers' movement, the government launched a referendum. We have no illusions about the intentions or the ability of SYRIZA to conflict with the interests of the capital and the capitalist institutions. However, voting NO to the proposals of the troika, may open, under appropriate conditions, a new round of political crisis of the system that exploits and oppresses us.

In the following days, the traditional parties of the capital, ND and PASOK, together with the ultra-neoliberal POTAMI, which altogether react fiercely to any taxation of corporate profits and of large incomes and demand even lower wages, will start ranting, in any way possible, about the alleged disaster that a rejection of the proposal of the institutions will bring. They will blackmail bluntly, brandishing the alleged disaster of an exit from the euro-zone. The working class, however, has already experienced the real disaster: austerity and capitalist aggressions. The working class cannot and should not be terrified, because they have nothing substantial to lose by capital controls or by a general crisis in the euro-zone. On the contrary, when capitalism, the system that exploits us, shakes, we are preparing for battle. What will give us a rupture with the EU and the IMF is confidence and will for struggle, not despair and fear.

This rupture cannot be made merely by voting. Neither the elections could not have been the magic solution to get rid of austerity, nor can it be the referendum. The next few days should find us in the streets, so as to confront the reactionary, pro-capitalist gatherings like “We stay in Europe”, but also so as to ensure that there is real rupture, and that the referendum will not be just a negotiating maneuver of Tsipras and the leadership of SYRIZA. Besides, let's not have any illusion: if it weren't for the mass mobilizations, not only the recent ones but, mainly, those of all previous years, there would be no jam with the institutions and the memoranda would proceed normally.

Our NO to the proposals of the troika is in no way a vote of confidence to the government of SYRIZA – ANEL.

Besides, their own proposals, the text of the 47 pages and the amendments made afterwards, are also totally unacceptable and represent a new memorandum, maybe a little bit more mild, but including new cuts and privatizations. Actually, in certain issues, the proposals of the government are even more reactionary than those of the institutions: defending armament programs, preservation of the tax breaks for shipowners. We will say NO to these proposals as well, with our struggles.

On Sunday, July 5 we vote NO.

NO: so as to open the rift, and not to begin a new round of negotiations

NO: in the streets and not only in the ballot

NO: to this and to every agreement

NO: overall to the euro-zone, the EU and the IMF, and not just to their proposals

NO: to the Troika, but also to any other administrator of the same system

OKDE-Spartakos CC

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A no vote against blackmail

All eyes are on Greece in the days before a July 5 referendum on whether to accept even more drastic austerity measures or to defy the blackmail demands of Europe's rulers.

Banks are closed, and the Greece's left-wing government has imposed some controls on capital for at least the week leading up to the vote—a necessary response to the financial strangulation of the country by the European lenders and their political representatives. This has produced a tense atmosphere as Greeks scrape together whatever cash they can and line up to buy groceries and other necessities. But there are also signs of anger and resistance against the extortion tactics of the lenders—like the large “vote no” demonstration in Syntagma Square in Athens on June 29.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announced the surprise referendum after European political leaders and representatives of the “institutions”—the European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—issued their latest ultimatum for even deeper cuts, sped-up privatizations and higher taxes on working people in return for extending the bailout of the Greek financial system. Since SYRIZA won national elections on January 25 and formed a new government, Tsipras has offered Europe substantial concessions from the radical left party's commitment to reverse austerity, but the lenders want capitulation.

The other pressure on Tsipras and the government has come from the influential left wing of SYRIZA, which is

demanding a rejection of further retreats and a change of course, starting with a commitment to use all available resources to carry out measures that will aid workers and the poor. The following statement was issued by the Red Network , an alliance of revolutionary organizations within SYRIZA that participate in the party's Left Platform.

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to reject the ultimatum of the lenders, to refuse to sign a new Memorandum imposing hyper-austerity, and to ask for an expression of the will of the people by referendum on July 5 is a decision that transforms Greek politics.

This decision proves that the challenge begun by the social struggles to resist austerity and continued with the elections on January 25 is deeper and more durable than the supporters of neoliberalism, both local and international, anticipated. It also frees SYRIZA and the popular hopes for change from the dead end of continuing negotiations with the lenders and the impasse resulting from the February 20 agreement with the lenders.

This proves what we, among the most critical voices inside SYRIZA, insisted in the months that have passed since the election: SYRIZA cannot be easily transformed into a party of austerity.

FROM THE moment that Alexis Tsipras announced the referendum, a battle of extreme importance was underway.

The "institutions" and the leaders of European governments are directing their threats of economic strangulation not only against the left-wing government, but against the workers and popular masses of Greece.

Their local partners, including the "internal troika" of New Democracy, PASOK and Potami, are watching with fear as the international guardians of the Memorandums—the regime of hyper-austerity imposed throughout all these years on behalf of the bankers, industrialists and shipowners—are losing their hold.

Everything indicates that the coming days will see a furious battle in which both sides will go all-out. The working class and popular masses have every reason to fight this battle with all their strength, aiming for a clear victory. For a NO: No to Memorandums, no to austerity, no to debt, no to the blackmail of the lenders.

Winning this battle will renew the left-wing dynamic expressed in the working class and popular vote for SYRIZA in the January elections. It will show again that the political and social balance of forces has shifted in Greece.

A victory on July 5 will not return the situation to where things stood when the negotiations collapsed, with the despicable ultimatum of the lenders. A victory will underline, with even more urgency, the need to follow, quickly and unilaterally, the minimum anti-austerity measures that SYRIZA promised in the Thessaloniki program before the elections. That includes stopping debt repayments to the lenders, with the goal of cancelling a majority of the debt; carrying out measures to improve the life of workers and poor; and financing all of this with heavy taxes on corporations and the rich, renationalizing large public enterprises and putting the banks under social control.

Every necessary measure, whether political, diplomatic or financial, must be taken to ensure that this policy is carried out. Our response to the blackmail of the lenders is that the struggle against austerity will not be governed by concerns about the euro system or by the consent of the rulers of Europe.

In the days ahead, two distinct worlds will collide. On the one hand, there is the world of those who have benefited from the brutality of the Memorandums—the local elite and their international patrons and partners. They will rely on blackmail involving the banks, on draining capital out of the country, on causing a chaotic crisis.

Viewpoints from the Greek left

On the other hand, there is the world of workers and the poor, which has no advantages to rely on other than the fact that it is vast majority of people in society.

The victory of one of these worlds will mean the defeat of the other. Therefore, no individual or organization on the left can hesitate for a moment. It is our duty to immediately build an alliance that will organize for a no vote”an alliance that can win a victory for the working class and the popular masses.

Regardless of the mistakes that have been made since January, and without underestimating the unprecedented difficulties we face in this moment, now is not the time for academic debates. It is time for struggle. It is a time to claim a great victory for the working people of Greece that will significantly change the existing state of affairs.

Red Network (Syriza)

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