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# **'I think that the dilemma of 'reform or revolution?' is still valid'**

- Debate - Perspectives in Greece -

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**Left Voice interviewed Kostas Skordoulis, a leading member of OKDE-Spartakos about the current situation in Greece following the resignation of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and the recent formation of Popular Unity. Kostas spoke to us in a personal capacity.**

**Alejandra RÃ-os**

**From Athens**

**How do you read Tsipras' resignation and what are the implications?**

The collapse of the SYRIZA government is a direct outcome of the massive OXI vote in the referendum of the 5th July. This massive 62% in favour of OXI was an explicitly class vote. It was a vote against the strategic choices of the Greek and European capital i.e. neoliberalism, austerity policies, memoranda, the euro.

I have many good reasons to believe that Tsipras and his fraction in the party had built their plans for negotiations with the troika on the basis of the defeat of OXI. They miscalculated the social dynamics. When Tsipras agreed on the 3rd memorandum, he knew very well that his government has lost its legitimacy among the people.

But there is more than that. It has to do with the class nature of SYRIZA as a party and the illusions for a "left government". Reformists believe that the state is a neutral apparatus and it is sufficient to put some leftists in key positions and then they can use the state to implement their policy. A "left government" is nothing more than a group of leftwing politicians trying to administer the bourgeois state. This schema has never worked, or to be more precise, has never worked in favour of the working class. The SYRIZA government was not an exception. The schema of "left government" was doomed to failure right from its initial conception.

My last point concerns all those in the international left who supported SYRIZA and the idea of "left government". It's time for them to draw a balance sheet of this experience and point to the underpinnings of their analysis.

**What is Syriza's future after the departure of the Left Platform?**

With the departure of the Left Platform SYRIZA has lost its last left alibi and it now emerges as the main political formation capable of implementing austerity politics. It is moving rapidly to fill the vacuum created by the main bourgeois parties. The crisis of political representation of the Greek bourgeoisie is now going to be administered by SYRIZA. In fact, it is the end of SYRIZA as we used to know it i.e. as a left reformist party.

At this point, I would like to add that SYRIZA is facing a tsunami of departures. Regional Party Committees and individual members (and recently the Secretary of the Party) announce their resignation from the party every day but without joining "Popular Unity", the party founded by the Left Platform. If this rate of departures continues in the next weeks, then SYRIZA party structures are in the verge of collapsing.

**What does the formation of the "Popular Unity" Party represent for the Greek Left?**

Undoubtedly the formation of the "Popular Unity" (PU) Party by SYRIZA's Left Platform will result in a major re-composition in the Greek Left.

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A couple of weeks ago, there was a declaration signed by well known militants (including Lafazanis, leader of SYRIZA's Left Platform) representing 13 organizations of the Greek Left (among them two Trotskyist organizations: DEA/the sister organization of the American ISO in Greece and "Xekinima"/the Greek section of the CWI plus two of the component organizations of Antarsya: ARAN and ARAS) calling for the formation of a broad political front which will give voice to the OXI vote.

Then the Left Platform changed course and announced the formation of "Popular Unity". On Monday 24th August, PU submitted an application to the Greek Supreme Court to be recognized as a formal political Party. Alavanos, ex-leader of SYRIZA and now leading the group "Plan-B", has already formally joined PU.

The "Communist Tendency of SYRIZA", which is the Greek section of the IMT (Alan Woods), announced that it is also going to join PU. Personally, I do not know if they will join formally being part of this project overcoming DEA's objections or this is part of their entryism tactics. It is expected that more "personalities" and groups are going to be admitted in the PU as the election time approaches. The landscape of the Greek Left is changing very quickly.

### **What is Popular Unity's programme?**

The aspirations of the PU is to become the "good" SYRIZA of 2012 by defending the "Thessaloniki Program" with the sole addition of a rather critical stance towards the "euro". PU defines itself as an anti-memoranda, anti-austerity and conditionally an anti-eurozone political party.

PU has been described by its leadership as a broad political party extending from the left socialdemocracy to the far left. Kostas Isihos, one of PU's prominent members and an ex-minister in the SYRIZA government interviewed by Russian media, stated that the PU will defend the "original" SYRIZA program.

There are discussions among PU members whether the new party will be SYRIZA No2, a "good" SYRIZA or it will embark for something new with a new program.

For purely electoral reasons the option of "good" SYRIZA is gaining ground.

### **What are the different political projects within Antarsya?**

For the past 3 years in ANTARSYA, two different political projects coexist in creative tension: one that sees ANTARSYA as a transitional political formation towards a broad radical anti-EU left front mainly represented by ARAN and ARAS and another one that sees ANTARSYA as an existing anticapitalist front that has to be further implanted in the workplaces and in the social movements with the prospect of being transformed into a genuine mass revolutionary working class party in the future. This second project is supported by OKDE-Spartakos and the SEK to varying degrees. And I am saying in varying degrees because SEK is already a party and therefore sees ANTARSYA as an anticapitalist front in which the revolutionary party operates.

The interesting case is that NAR, which is by far the biggest component organization of ANTARSYA, is constantly oscillating between these two projects, its final position being determined by its internal balance of views. During the last year, the NAR majority inclined towards project 1 and so ANTARSYA-MARS was formed.

### **Is an alliance between Popular Unity and Antarsya (or sectors of it) possible?**

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The different projects in ANTARSYA are a distorted reflection of the debate that takes place internationally on "the broad parties strategy".

Today, Antarsya's project 1 relates very favourably to the formation of the PU and seeks some kind of electoral alliance with it or even a fusion on the basis of the common declaration signed by the representatives of the 13 left organizations. Project 2 keeps a distance although SEK participates in the discussions with PU and OKDE-Spartakos does not.

Last week there was a meeting between Antarsya and Popular Unity. It is not yet clear to many in Antarsya if the meeting was within the framework of Antarsya's open call to other left organizations issued 10 days ago or it was a continuation of the discussions that started between some sectors of Antarsya and Lafazanis. After the meeting, a joined communiqué was issued that says virtually nothing apart from the already known: that the atmosphere was friendly but there were programmatic differences mainly concerning the policy towards the Eurozone.

Whether Antarsya is going to form an electoral front with the PU, OR some component organizations of Antarsya (namely ARAN, ARAS and their satellites in MARS) are going to merge with the PU, OR Antarsya or part of it will remain autonomous is going to be determined by the outcome of the balance of forces inside Antarsya and mainly by what the NAR majority will decide. This will be monitored in a series of meetings of the Antarsya National Council and of the Local Committees that will be held next weekend.

### **What is the response of OKDE-Spartakos to the formation of Popular Unity?**

OKDE-Spartakos has been constantly arguing for independent class politics, for the autonomous political expression of the working class and the social movements which in the present period in Greece is reflected by the autonomous presence of Antarsya. In a series of documents we have genuinely justified our disagreement with the "Broad Party Strategy" and the reasons why we opposed the SYRIZA project based on a revolutionary Marxist analysis and the best traditions of the Fourth International. Our analysis has been tragically verified. It took a 3rd memorandum imposed upon the Greek working people so that the class nature of left reformism is exposed. Today, the PU wants to repeat the same failed experiment. They want to re-establish the good SYRIZA of 2012 with the same program. We did not relate to SYRIZA then, we are not going to relate to PU now. In fact, I think that the dilemma "reform or revolution?" as posed by Rosa is still valid. A call for an electoral alliance (an electoral front) with the reformists at the expense of the anticapitalist program is nothing less than a call for an accommodation to the existing state of affairs. We favour the "United Front" which is formed around specific issues and does not require a programmatic agreement among the organizations involved. On this basis, I think we should be open to cooperate with other left organizations including the PU in antifascist, antiracist work and on other crucial issues as prioritized by the social movements and their intervention and ours converge.

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