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Lessons from Greece

What can we learn from Greece?

- Debate - Perspectives in Greece -

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A lot of nonsense has been said about reform and revolution. However, the experiences from Greece in 2015 shed clear light on this question.

The question about reform and revolution is not about the speed of the development, it is not about patience or impatience and it is not about violence.

Revolutionary socialists work to cause a break with the existing system and a break with the ruling class.

Social democratic currents all over the world and often communists too, have time after time refrained from steps that could lead to a break with the bourgeoisie.

In contrast to that, revolutionary currents understand that in a society in crisis, a break with the ruling class can be the only way to bring society forward and out of the crisis.

Such a break can only succeed if it is based on a strong public will to change and a movement to come out of the crisis.

Committees for food distribution, committees for self-reliance etc. - such structures play a role in almost all revolutions.

Reform and revolution is not about making compromises. Revolutionaries as well as reformists are making compromises from time to time. It is about standing firm and fight when the right time has come.

A substantial difference between revolutionary and reformist policies is what you see as the most important arena.

Reformist policy is seeking a negotiated compromise, and therefore the most important arena and fighting place is the negotiation room, which is often surrounded by big mystery and secrecy. When you enter the negotiations, you do not want to show the opponents your cards, and therefore you cannot tell the people what you want.

On the contrary, revolutionary policy considers the entire society as a fighting place and sees the broad population as the active force. The political party therefore must go open out with clear policies to the population. It must be trusted when it says that it will defend social and economic interests of the broad population and the top priority must be to raise proposals suitable for mobilizing and organizing the population

Secret negotiations are favorable for the ruling financial capitalists and bureaucrats and are harmful for the workers.

We can state that Syriza in the period since they achieved governmental power let themselves caught in a trap of negotiations.

The strange referendum

What can we learn from Greece?

The strangest point in the entire Greek development was the referendum of July 5. Here, Alexis Tsipras asked for a mandate to refuse the dictate of the EU and he was met with enthusiastic public support. A massive majority of 62 % voted no to the proposals from EU and thus Syriza in principle had a majority for more radical policies. But they jumped up like a tiger and fell down like a lamb. Less than 14 days later, Syriza bowed to EU.

Why? What was the purpose of that pantomime? You can probably see it as a last attempt to put pressure to EU. Tsipras tightened his tie and went in to Aunt Merkel with a slim attaché back containing two folders. In one was the result of the referendum, showing what the Greek people wanted. In the other a proposed agreement in Greek, German and English, which Tsipras wanted Merkel to sign - the solution of the crisis. But Merkel didn't care.

Here is another difference between revolutionaries and reformists. Revolutionary as well as reformists use activation of the population: what we on the left in the old times called "mobilizations" with an awful word. But for the reformist politician, that is just a supplementary tool to get a better position in the negotiations. For the revolutionary, the activation of the population is the center of the political line.

For the European left, this must lead to broad discussions and self-reflections. The next battlefield can be Spain with Podemos, and it is necessary that they learn from Syriza.

In Denmark, I hope that the Red-Green Alliance will learn something from this. It confirms the anti-EU position held by the party since its foundation. Everybody must learn that you should never enter negotiations without considering what to do if your counterpart says no to your demands! If we have aspirations to be in front of the defense of the social and economic interests of the working people and, further on, of the transformation of society, then we must build a party on a broad basis capable of initiating and promoting popular activities.