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Greece

A Pyrrhic victory

- IV Online magazine - 2012 - IV449 - June 2012 -

Publication date: Friday 22 June 2012

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“It is not on fear but on hope that we base our future.” It was with these words that Alexis Tsipras reacted to the electoral defeat of Syriza, the coalition of the radical left which he leads. For, beyond the right’s victory, nothing is resolved for the Greek people, and nor will anything be easy for the parties called upon to govern in the context of a cabinet of national unity. Also, paradoxically, Syriza’s defeat seems to be a factor not of demoralisation, but rather of hope. This interview with Dimitris Hilaris of OKDE-Spartakos was conducted by Paolo Gilardi for *l’Anticapitaliste*.

How disappointed are you, Dimitris, with this victory for the right in the June 17 elections?

It is a Pyrrhic victory. During the electoral campaign, the media played on fear, on exit from the euro, the effects of not respecting the memorandums signed with the EY, of governmental instability. The right has thus succeeded in capturing the votes of the social layers terrorised by this instability. Whereas scooped up votes among workers and youth, the right won the votes of the middle classes and an older section of the population. But neither New Democracy, who won with 29.66%, nor Syriza with 26.89%, have succeeded in mobilising the 35% who abstained. Syriza gained 10% extra in relation to May 6th from the other left forces. The ND did the same on the right.

And now?

Now we will see that it is a Pyrrhic victory. A national unity government including the ND, PASOK and the Democratic Left will go through the same contradictions which traverse Greek society. Also, except for short periods, we have never had a national unity government in Greece. And this government will be responsible for applying the potions of the on the street.

Exactly, the street mobilisations...

The result for Syriza has given confidence. Confidence in a social dynamic, that of the mobilisations over the last three years, but also confidence in the possibility of creating a radical left force, whatever the ambiguities of Syriza. This situation favours a discussion on alternatives because a demand is made to go beyond protest and advance alternative solutions. That stimulates politicisation, and that isn’t good for the government.

A social and political dynamic is underway. And it is currently more important than the temptation, which exists, of relying on a strong parliamentary representation of the radical left. It is necessary however to be wary of a division of labour between the movements, responsible for protesting, and the left parties which practice politics.

As an electoral expression of struggles, Syriza appears as a model in Europe

As its leaders say, Syriza is “a party of democratic normality”. But if Syriza respects bourgeois legality, this latter in no way respects Syriza. And it is in this dynamic that things can happen. It is not enough to denounce the ambiguities of Syriza – its programme is much more moderate than its slogans - but we should stimulate the emergence of a debate on the left on a political alternative.

We, the forces of the anti-capitalist coalition, should draw the lessons of this experience. We need to be involved in a

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social and political dynamic which desires change. It should lead to a united front with Syriza and the KKE around the idea of a left government which is not a government of management but of rupture.

Which means?

Which means cancelling the memorandums, breaking with the euro and the European Union. Not to go back to the drachma, but to deprive the troika of the instrument of threat and blackmail which is the euro. Indeed, how can we speak of the nationalisation of the banks –or of simple public control of the latter as Syriza advocates – if we don't control the creation of the currency? It is up to us to deal with the threat: if you continue with your diktats, we can leave the euro. And for that we must convince the masses that there is a life beyond the euro but not in nationalist terms.

And precisely, in relation to that, the far right has confirmed its presence.

That is why it has to be combated in the street, displacing the conflict to the social rather than the national terrain.

Some estimates talk of 560 billion Euros of tax evasion for the year 2010 alone. What can be done in Europe in support of the Greek people?

International solidarity is precious for us. We would feel less isolated at a time when they wish to make us think that we are alone in Europe. And then, if you can put pressure on the banks so that they reveal the breadth of the deposits they hold from rich Greeks...

The Federal Council has provided a list of 4,000 US citizens who hold accounts in Switzerland; can we expect them to make public the names of the Greek billionaires who hold their assets in Switzerland?

*First published in French in the Swiss journal **l'Anticapitaliste**.*