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IC 2013 discussion

“Anti-austerity governments” are not a solution: For a militant and revolutionary International

- Debate - Building new parties of the left -
Publication date: Monday 10 June 2013

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This text was submitted to the discussion by members of the leaderships of the Greek section of the Fourth International (OKDE-Spartakos) and of the NPA, members of the Fourth International.

1. The international capitalist crisis is still far from over. Some countries may be more severely struck by it, because of the special way they are articulated in the international division of labor, but it nevertheless remains an international structural crisis of the capitalist system itself. This means that the problem of the countries that are most concerned (especially the ones of the European South) can be solved neither simply by monetary or other economical handlings, nor by a “national” productive reconstruction policy in the framework of capitalist economy.

2. As for its structural character, this crisis is in the final analysis a crisis of over-accumulation, over-production of values that is. The creeping, for decades, problem of the surplus capital that can't be put in use uncovers itself and can't be postponed anymore through over-loaning, opening of new capitalist markets (as it was the case of the former USSR and the people's republics of the 90s') etc. This means, on one hand, that the crisis is of historical dimensions and on the other, that if it is to be surpassed in favor of the capital's interests, a vast depreciation/destruction of capital and, at the same time, a devaluation of labor force and a collapse of the bargaining power of the working classes are needed. This fact leads to a social war on two levels: on the first and more fundamental, the bourgeois classes in their international alliance against the proletariat, on the second one the various parts of the same bourgeois class against each other about who is going to lift the weight of the crisis. For this reason, it is not impossible the national inter-imperialist rivalries getting more acute, even to the point of an open conflict, as part of an extra-economic effort for the crisis to be surpassed and their system to be saved.

3. However, the first aspect, the class war, is the dominant one in the current situation. The bourgeois classes in Europe and worldwide are using the weaponry of international imperialist institutions, such as the IMF, the WB and the EU, that are invulnerable against any democratic control, even conventional/bourgeois. For this reason, the struggle against all these apparatuses becomes of great importance and should have a central position in a contemporary revolutionary program. Especially in Europe, the struggle for the dissolution of the EU and the Eurozone, within the framework of a transitional program and in combination with the internationalist project for the united socialist states of Europe, de facto turns into a key factor.

4. As for the special form that the crisis has taken in several countries, the one of a debt crisis, the importance of the cancellation of the public debt, with the exception of the part that is owed to insurance funds and workers' organizations, as a catchword around which there can be struggles is central. This has nothing to do with a reproduction of past solutions given within the framework of the very same capitalist economy (Argentina, Russia, or, in the best of all cases, Ecuador), but it is about an elementary class dilemma: who pays the crisis?

5. In the last 4 years, class struggles and social movements have multiplied, taking in several cases the form of open revolts or even revolutionary processes. The development of the political crisis is of course unequal. The most striking example is the Arab Spring, which, at least in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, is continuing with special interest. Here, we should add the revolts in Athens and London, the workers' struggles in Greece, Spain (with the milestone of the great miners' strike in Asturias), Portugal and Italy, and of course the tragic cases of Libya and particularly Syria. In the USA the volatile spread of the "Occupy" movement, while not reaching the same level of profound social upheaval, reflects a similar social instability. All this means that, besides the objective preconditions, there is also the subjective substrate, the militant will of the masses, for a revolutionary program to spread. The idea that in front of the severity of the crisis and the capitalist offensive one should only pose “realistic” defensive goals, a reflex shown by a significant part of the left worldwide, is radically wrong. The exactly opposite is true: in a period

when the matter of power is objectively raised in certain countries or regions, a revolutionary answer is more timely than ever.

6. A revolutionary answer, despite the unfavorable relation of forces, is also certainly more realistic now, at least than it was 20 or 30 years ago. The bourgeois class in many countries faces political disarray and thus they are unable to devise a hegemonic strategic plan and form social alliances. In cases like Greece, they are not even able to offer themselves a reliable salvation plan. The traditional political structure in Europe, with the christian-democrats and the social-democrats switching positions in the capitalist management, shows signs of decomposition, especially in the South. Under these conditions, there are tremendous possibilities for the revolutionary and anticapitalist left.

7. However, the formula according to which the social-democracy's collapse leaves an empty space that is necessarily to be occupied by anticapitalists is insufficient and inaccurate. Social-democrat parties, adapted to capitalism and deeply corrupted, can't any more be characterized as reformist since many years, as they have long ago ceased raising any issues of social change, let alone socialism. So, between them and the revolutionary left, an intermediate space still exists: reformism. Despite the historic failure of both stalinism and eurocommunism, it is proved that there is a possibility for the older reformism to make a political comeback under new forms (the cases of Greece, France, and to a certain extent the Spanish State) or for a new reformism with relatively vast acceptance to be formed, as happened in the cases of Communist Refoundation, the German Left (Die Linke), but also a part of Bloco in Portugal or the Red-Green Alliance. The case of Syriza, that the closer they get to an electoral win, the more they orient their program to more "realistic" directions, with their goal being admittedly something equal to the governments of Brazil and Argentina, serves as the emblematic example, it is although already clear that it can't offer a solution to the working people's problems. Let us not forget the case of Cyprus, where the left government under AKEL, brother party of both Syriza and KKE, is the one that led the country under the Memorandum and austerity (a choice that is publicly praised by the Syriza leadership).

8. This avalanche of political rearrangement also favors the far right. In France, the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary and other countries, too, xenophobic far right parties have gained a not at all negligible position in the central political scene as well as in the Parliament. The Golden Dawn in Greece is though a new phenomenon, which can only be compared to the case of the NPD in the federal states of the ex-Eastern Germany. It bears the features of a real proto-fascist movement, rooted inside the petit-bourgeois masses that are crushed by the crisis. It becomes clear that Nazism and fascism have not been historically eradicated; on the contrary they can once more be used by the bourgeois classes to crush the workers' organizations and individualize the proletariat. Revolutionary Marxists can't wage the struggle against fascism in the name of the bourgeois democracy, that has no more to offer to the workers and the youth than poverty and authoritarianism, but they owe to prefix their own vision and program. However, above all they have to get in the front line of the formation of a unique front of action against fascism and the construction of solidarity among local and foreign workers in each country, a point of strategic political importance in this given stage of class struggle.

9. The electoral instability in many countries can't anymore be faced with just applying past formulas. The voters' moving only rarely corresponds to a real militancy in the parties that are electorally reinforced. This is not valid only for the right, but for the left too. This means, firstly, that the instability of social consciousness is even larger than one can suppose by the electoral results, thus it is possible, under suitable conditions, that minority political currents rapidly increase their influence and eventually transform into majorities. Secondly, the electoral relation of forces expresses the real relation in society in an even more deformed way than in the past. SYRIZA offer an interesting example also here: with a 25% in the polls, they are not represented by more than a 5-10% in the union federations and they can't control but a handful of trade unions. Thirdly, we should conceive the political crisis in all its depth: it's not only a crisis of confidence in the traditional leaderships, but a mass depreciation of all political parties and bourgeois institutions. For this reason, preserving their independence from state institutions and bureaucracies is for revolutionary Marxists a need more vital than ever (without this implying the split of unions or any sectarianism in social struggles).

10. It should be admitted that, unfortunately, the left, despite its struggles, fails to administer a plan of real rupture with capitalism and a leadership towards this direction. Reformism has neither the ability nor the will to do so. At the same time, the left beyond reformism seems to be embarrassed and confused. Many forces are abandoning the project of the anti-capitalist left, a project that, despite its vagueness, its weaknesses and dead-ends in some cases, could be a useful tool for the shift in the relation of forces in reformism's expense and in favor of the revolutionary tendencies. As for our own forces, many sections of the International at this time aren't able to form a distinct political presence and do political work in the working class, in several cases to the extent for their very existence to be at stake. Unanswered strategic questions have generated considerable disarray in the ranks of the FI over the last decade in countries like Brazil, Italy, Denmark, Portugal, and elsewhere, even a severe blindness to the reformism of SYRIZA among many comrades. In Brazil, to cite only one example, the inability of our cadre to clearly delineate a revolutionary identity and pose a revolutionary alternative led to a complete capitulation by the majority of the section to the Lula government after it took power.

11. Facing the great challenges of our times, the revolutionary left and the International can't restrain themselves to a simplistic propaganda about the need for political unity of all the left. In the biggest, since decades, capitalist crisis, strategy is not a luxury. The problem is not that all forces that identify themselves as left are not united in a single organization, but that the left can't offer a plan that begins from the immediate shift of the living conditions of the exploited and suppressed and ends to the revolutionary overthrow of the system. In the time that the mobilized masses pose the question: what society?, one should give answers on the basis of their vision and goals, and not ceaselessly play the card of the unity of all left, ignoring strategic differences. Above all, the International shouldn't defend the idea of a "political alternative" with reformists. The so-called "anti-austerity governments", that is to say governments dominated by reformists, are unable and even unwilling to confront capital, so they will be doomed to implement austerity policies too, as the examples of Cyprus or Andalucia prove. That's why maintaining our political and organizational independence, even in this time of strong pressure by reformists on us, is so important. We must promote the idea of "workers' governments" able to implement key transitional measures adapted to the current situation, thanks to the massive mobilization of the masses and their self-organization.

12. In this framework, our main duty now is to build national sections and an International that will be able to cope with what our times require, revitalize and lead the extremely important situations that are born every day. The building of existing sections and the formation of new ones, where there isn't any, especially in regions and countries that are of increased gravity for the class struggle at this moment, is extremely crucial. The first step towards this aim is to help politically and materially the sections of the FI in key countries, even on an elementary level. In Greece, in the Spanish State and elsewhere, the national or local sections need financial support to have the basic means to appear politically in an efficient way. When famous spokespersons or personalities of the International visit those countries, they should meet the sections and organize political activities with them. When a statement or a decision concerning a country is taken, the section of this country must be at least consulted. We need to build tools to get more implemented in the working class and the youth. The existence of the International youth camp, as well as the international work in the Auto and health sectors, prove that we are able to work in that direction.

We need national sections, parties and organizations based on class independence, independence from institutions, governments and their budgets, imperialist apparatuses, shortly from the bourgeois state, that will aspire not only to express, but also to build social movements and resistances substantially and from a class aspect. Sections of a massive, revolutionary and democratic International, able to respect pluralism and special conditions in every country, and consequently all different tactics that derive from them, but also able to make decisions in its meetings, take position in crucial matters and present itself in the public as a genuinely revolutionary political organization, with a concrete political program and theses. We need an International that encourages unity in action, that does not deny debate and convergence with other currents, but that does not either stand for political or/and organizational fusion with reformism and Stalinism.

13. Towards this direction, an open, democratic and collective debate, under the leaderships' responsibility, in all

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sections and meetings of the International, about the necessary contemporary transitional program and, what's even more, about an actual revolutionary policy, is more timely and urgent than ever. By its ability to make revolutionary politics today, and not in a far future, is that our current will be judged.

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