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Greece

The electoral victory of SYRIZA should open the road for a political victory of the Left

- IV Online magazine - 2014 - IV474 - July 2014 -
Publication date: Monday 7 July 2014

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This statement by DEA was made on 26 May 2014.

The result of the European elections, 26,6% and 1,5 million votes for SYRIZA, is a clear electoral victory for the radical Left.

The coalition government of New Democracy and PASOK is now demonstrated as a minority government – for the first time after an official ballot, and not just in the opinion polls.

It no longer has the democratic legitimacy to apply the harsh austerity measures that are included in the “middle-term program”, that is the new agreement between the local ruling class and the international “creditors”.

The success of SYRIZA becomes clearer if we also keep in mind the tough test of a triple election –municipal, provincial and European. When it comes to local elections, the difficulties are way bigger, because the “local” established politicians are more resilient. The wave of huge political upheavals, which was unleashed by the financial crisis and the mass struggles of 2010-12, reaches these places with delay and with a distorted way –as was proven by the oversupply of “independent” candidates.

Even in this difficult field, SYRIZA had important conquests, like the victory in the Province of Attiki [\[1\]](#), the Province of the Islands of Ionian Sea and many large working-class municipalities.

Between the first and the second round of the local elections, SYRIZA proved that it is not arrogant towards the “other” Left. Immediately and unilaterally, it called for massive support to the candidates of the Communist Party, wherever they were facing candidates of New Democracy or PASOK in the second round (the municipalities of Patra, Chaidari, Petroupoli, Ikaria). The comfortable victory of the Communist Party candidates in all these municipalities, proves that the people of SYRIZA, “trained” to the principle of left-wing unity, applied this political line massively and without hesitations.

Fortunately, the comrades of ANTARSYA took a similar approach, calling for a vote for the SYRIZA candidate in the Municipality of Athens in the second round.

Unfortunately, the comrades of the Communist Party chose the tactic of “keeping equal distances” from SYRIZA and the candidates of the coalition government, calling their supporters to stay neutral.

In the Municipality of Athens, G. Sakellaridis, representing SYRIZA, achieved an important result. He was narrowly defeated from G. Kaminis, who was backed by the coalition of all the pro-austerity forces, with the score being 51,4% - 48,6%. Thus, it was proven that “equal distances” are never equal in the end.

Of particular importance are the left-wing victories in a series of municipalities (for example Chalandri, Philadelphia, Keratsini) that were based on a radical program and clear, “movement-oriented” alliances. Thus it was proven once again that radical left politics don't lead to marginalization. On the contrary, in the conjuncture of crisis, it is a precondition for difficult or even unexpected victories.

In the European elections, SYRIZA is the first party, 3,8% ahead from New Democracy. This proves that the political

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and electoral successes of May and June 2012 were not a coincidence, they were not just a “firecracker” in the context of the anti-austerity revolt of that time.

Despite the ruthless attack of the ruling class and the Mass Media, SYRIZA preserves its forces on a very high level, raising the Left to the first place and enhancing the prospect of a left-wing government. It is important to note that this success happened as the mass movement is facing a low tide, at least in comparison to the generalized revolt of 2010-12.

The Communist Party, helped by its organizational strength and capacities, succeeded a limited regroup of its support in comparison to June 2012, but is still behind its support on May 2012: It won 6,09% and 341.748 votes now, in comparison with 4,5% and 277.227 votes in June 2012 and with 8,48% and 536.072 votes in May 2012.

In a similar fashion, ANTARSYA won 0,72% and 40.396 votes now, in comparison with 0,33% and 20.396 votes in June 2012 and 1,19% and 75.416 votes in May 2012.

But the relative retreat of the mass movement -despite the heroic struggles of the cleaning ladies, the teachers, the nurses etc- is providing the government some free space to manoeuvre and the ability to regroup its forces.

Its main pillar in this effort is the percentage of the center-left. The combined vote of the various center-left parties shows that the political space of social-liberalism has some potential to survive. The starting point of this effort is the 8,03% of the “Olive Tree” [\[2\]](#) with 450.000 votes, the 6,6% of the “River” (translators note: newly formed media-sponsored, “antipolitical”, “hipster” party) with 370.000 votes, and the 1,2% of the Democratic Left, with 67.000 votes. Of course even this combined support is way below the force of the once almighty PASOK. And of course the prospects of a center-left regroup will depend on the question of its position towards the government of Samaras. Whether it will regroup to support it, or it will try to take its own independent course.

For now this political “space” -that demagogues about having some “social sensitivity”- is the pillar that supports the far-right leadership of New Democracy, in the implementation of the most merciless austerity policy in contemporary history. It is the pillar that allows Samaras to dream about holding in the government until 2016.

The dark stain of the electoral results is the 9,39% and the 527.000 votes of Golden Dawn. DEA insists on the view that to crush the neo-Nazis, we need to fight to reverse austerity, we need to wage the battle of ideas like antiracism, we need a generalized mobilization of the antifascist movement that will exclude the Nazis from the public spaces. We finally need to insist on our efforts to cut the umbilical cord that connects Golden Dawn with the state and its various “agencies”.

With all these in mind, there are valuable lessons for the militants of the resistance movement and the Left. The electoral success of SYRIZA is real and it does create a new political environment. But the overthrow of the coalition government, the rupture with the agreements with the troika and the EU, the reversal of austerity are tasks way more complex and difficult than a “narrow” electoral battle.

We need a massive movement, organized from below, in the streets and in strike actions. We need an escalation of the political struggle with initiatives of the Left. We need an alliance based on SYRIZA, the Communist Party and ANTARSYA that will be able to organize more firmly the bulk of “unaffiliated” activists.

We finally need a clear radical left program, with an anti-capitalist, socialist direction.

DEA

[1] Translators note: the region that includes the capital Athens and the surrounding municipalities.

[2] Translators note: PASOK and minor allies.