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What next for Greece?

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Description:

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The shadow of the Weimar Republic hangs over Greece: The election results of May 6

Andreas Kloke

The Greek parliamentary elections led to an earthquake-like change in the political landscape and to the end of the "two-party domination" by the conservative New Democracy (ND) and the social democratic PASOK. Compared to the 2009 elections, the ruling PASOK party fell from 43.9% to 13.2%, ND which is now the strongest party, won 18.9% (2009: 33.5%). On the other hand SYRIZA ("Coalition of the Radical Left") rose from 4.6 to 16.8% and has thus become the second largest party. The "Independent Greeks" led by P. Kammenos, a right-wing nationalist split from ND and founded in February 2012, a party that refuses to support the memoranda policies, are in the fourth place with 10.6%. The CPG (KKE), up to now the strongest left party, received 8.5% (2009: 7.5%). Chrysi Avgi ("Golden Dawn"), a gang of neo-Nazi Hitler nostalgia addicts gained 7.0% (441 000 votes, 2009: 0.3%), certainly the real "scoop" of these elections. The "Democratic Left" (DIMAR) is in the seventh place with 6.1%. DIMAR was founded in 2010 and is a right-wing split from SYN, the left-reformist party with origins in euro-communism and the main component of SYRIZA. The far-right LAOS failed with 2.9% (2009: 5.6%) due to the 3% threshold. The same happened to the "Green Ecologists" with 2.9% (2009: 2.5%) and three right-neoliberal formations, namely "Democratic Alliance" (DISI) with 2.6%, "Dimourgia xana" with 2.2% and "Action" (Drasi) with 1.8%. ANTARSYA ("Anti-Capitalist Left Alliance for the Overthrow"), essentially a coalition of some 10 anti-capitalist revolutionary organizations, received 1.2% (over 75,000 votes; 2009: 0.36%), the alliance of two ML organizations 0.3%, EEK, an organization that calls itself Trotskyite 0.1%. The percentage of valid votes cast was 62.7% (2009: 68.9% and 2007: 72.1%), again significantly lower than ever before, which also provides an indication of the falling acceptance of the parliamentary democracy, established in 1974 after the fall of the military junta, in the Greek population.

There is no question that the election results express the complete rejection of the memoranda policies by the clear majority of the electorate. On the one hand, the share of leftists in the broad sense has increased to 34% (if you count the ecologists, to 37%), on the other hand, the "anti-memorandum"-camp gained a total of around 60%. The very good result of the left must certainly be attributed to the general strikes of the last two years, and particularly to the large mobilizations and square occupations, particularly the Syntagma Square, from May 2010 to July last year, the great general strike of 12 and 13 October and the mass protests of well over half a million demonstrators on 12/02/12 at Athens alone, that is to the powerful movement directed against the memoranda policies, especially from May 2010 to February 2012.

The "ungovernableness" of the country

A crucial problem connected with the election result is known as the "ungovernableness" of the country, i.e. the great difficulties to continue the memoranda policies under the guise of "democratic" government coalitions. The leaders, but also the system-compliant media in Greece and Europe (as usual, especially in Germany) have launched a wild propaganda campaign to keep Greece on track and to secure the continuation of memoranda-slavery, the ruin and plunder of Greek society in favor of unbridled domination of domestic and foreign capital. The calls for the eviction of Greece from the euro-zone are getting louder.

Because of its good election result the SYRIZA leadership under A. Tsipras is playing a key role. The ideas of the left parties as a whole had been characterized during the election campaign as "unrealistic", "highly dangerous", "catastrophic", but after the elections the tables have been turned and SYRIZA was asked to "take its responsibility" and to participate in a "government of national unity" with ND, PASOK and DIMAR. The DIMAR leadership, which would like to serve in such a government, played a particularly bad role but finally it did not dare to do so without the consent of SYRIZA in the face of the election results. A day-long wrangling over the formation of a new government began, but ended without result. Therefore, the second round of the elections has been scheduled for June 17. According to current opinion polls SYRIZA has bright prospects to become the strongest party with well over 20%, and thus also to get hold of the "bonus" of 50 (of the total 300) seats in parliament. This totally undemocratic scheme was specifically included in the electoral law to allow a majority, at least of a coalition government of ND and PASOK. But it did not work since both parties together received only 149 seats.

There is no denying that it is not by chance that SYRIZA has become the first force of the left. Because SYRIZA spoke during the election campaign of a "left-wing government", for example to pressure KKE, but also because it does not favor a withdrawal from the euro-zone, despite the rejection of the memoranda policies, people voted for it massively. This reflects in part the stagnation or weakness of the resistance movement that has been seen since February and caused the rise of rather vague hopes that a fundamental shift in government policies could be achieved through a changing of parliamentary majorities. The SYRIZA leadership is coming under attack because of the ambiguities of its election promises from two sides: first, the forces of the establishment can harass SYRIZA to do everything to ensure that Greece remains in the euro-zone, or make SYRIZA also responsible for a possible failure of this intention and expose it; on the other hand, there are critics on the left, pointing out quite rightly that the various promises of SYRIZA leadership are inconsistent and contradictory. It is virtually inconceivable that a Greek left-wing government, if it came about, could accomplish a revocation of the memoranda policies and thus of the credit agreements agreed with the Troika, that are leading to a strangulation of the Greek society, without Greece's exit or expulsion from the euro-zone.

SYRIZA, KKE and ANTARSYA

In other words, a consistent "reform polic" in favour of working people and all memoranda victims that does not come into direct conflict with the interests of finance capital and big business in Greece, the EU countries and the United States, is very unlikely to be practicable. The SYRIZA leadership is anything but prepared to conduct politically this inevitable clash between the disparate interests of the perpetrators and victims, the exploiters and the exploited. However, it will have to put its cards on the table in one way or another. SYRIZA is an alliance with some "semi-Stalinist" and "semi-Trotskyist" organizations of the milieu of the (as yet) non-parliamentary left, but is dominated by the Synaspismos leadership. This assumes that the problems of the global capitalist crisis, but also the crisis of Greek society, are to be solved with "Keynesian" means within the framework of the capitalist system of exploitation. "Socialism" is in this perspective, at best, a distant goal, and achievable only at an "all-European" level etc. Despite its "radical" name SYRIZA is an alliance oriented to limited reforms, although in some nuances more to the left than the German "Left Party", for instance. It is certainly not a good sign that Tsipras wants to discuss and perhaps to come to an agreement with the French president F. Hollande, regarding the memoranda policies. The explosiveness of the current social and political situation will make inevitable a clarification of the contradictions in the policies of the SYRIZA leadership. Too strong is the desire of the great majority, to finish the continued

impoverishment and too weak the current will and the ability of the SYRIZA leadership, to implement this need into a real anti-capitalist (ultimately revolutionary) orientation.

The KKE leadership has decided to isolate itself even more from SYRIZA and the rest of the Left because its election result was not very favorable. The disadvantage of this attitude is that it is increasingly difficult to convince its own base that this strategy and tactics might be successful. The KKE leadership considers more or less openly that there will be no overthrow of the memoranda policies by mass mobilization from below and by the movement itself. Thus it points to a future "people's economy" and "people's democracy". But it is not able to explain how its objectives can be achieved if not by a sudden and massive increase of KKE votes, something that is obviously not in sight. It remains the mystery of the party leadership how all verbally proclaimed objectives, particularly the overcoming of capitalism and imperialism, may be imposed. It is foreseeable that the party itself can get into a crisis that may soon lead to greater friction losses.

ANTARSYA had not a sensationally good, but solid election result gaining 1.2%. It was the main force on the left that placed the importance of social resistance through strikes, occupations and mass protests, the self-organization of all victims of the memoranda policies, of the workers, young people, pensioners and of the partially "illegal" immigrants at the center of its election campaign. ANTARSYA has shown the way how social resistance may be victorious through the propagation of a program of actual transitional solutions that are geared to the real needs of the vast majority of the population and aimed at the self-organization of these people, and by adhering to the perspective of the anti-capitalist revolutionary overthrow of the existing political and social system.

ANTARSYA could have achieved a better result through a more consistent policy in the past two years, through greater unity, more and better activities of the local committees etc. But there was hardly a cure against the prevailing mood for a parliamentary change mainly in the last week before the elections. As the slogan of "left-wing government" before the election was nebulous and even now continues to remain so, it was essentially correct not to feed such hopes. However, ANTARSYA could come up with a statement supporting critically a left-wing government under certain conditions. That has not happened so far. The basic political and programmatic direction of ANTARSYA remains correct after all.

The ANTARSYA statement

The ANTARSYA declaration of May 14 states among other things:

"The left must have as its target the conquest of political power and government power by a subversive political and social movement. This can be achieved through the institutions of popular power and workers' control and the connection of the question of government power with a contemporary revolutionary strategy, by breaking with capital and imperialism through a workers' and popular movement capable of imposing its own power and government.

"The influence of ANTARSYA was finally limited by parliamentary illusions of a "left-wing government" that might lead to the immediate and conflict-free solution of the problems without an insurrection. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to continue the efforts to convince the broad popular layers that it will not be possible to confront the most pressing and immediate social problems with answers simply directed "against the memoranda", without leaving the euro-zone, the decoupling from the EU and without the complete break with the system that produces crises and memoranda. The collision course with the lenders and capital is not an easy path, not the easy victory that a "left government" may give us, but will be a difficult, uphill battle, the culmination of the political class struggle that requires the development of the struggle organs of the workers' rank and file. It will be necessary to continue the efforts to connect all militants who are in a radicalization process and their struggles on the basis of the program of

"anti-capitalist revolution" and contemporary forms of a socialist and communist perspective.

"It is necessary that broad layers of the population take the matter into their own hands in order to avoid setbacks and to proceed on the path of the great struggles and of the outcome of the May 6 result, to develop a political workers' and grassroots movement, to fight for the abolition of the memoranda, of the loan agreement and of all related laws, to increase the salaries and pensions to a decent level and to enforce the prohibition of dismissals. All further privatizations must be prevented and those already implemented must be reversed. We have to demand the nationalization of the banks and big companies of strategic importance under workers' control. Spending on education and health must be increased. The movement of civil disobedience "I will not pay" and for the final abolition of the poll taxes, the tolls etc. must be supported. The insubordination and resistance against the EU decisions directed against the workers must be strengthened, the cancellation of the law on fiscal package, the exit from the euro-zone and the EU by strengthening the organs of self-organization beyond the trade union bureaucracies have to be demanded and organized.

"ANTARSYA stands by its proposal to build at once a battle front for the break with the system and for the defense against the attack and to proceed immediately with the strengthening of the struggles. The workers' organs of struggle must be developed and supported. The call is addressed to all forces of the left, to be active into this direction as soon as possible.

"At the same time ANTARSYA promotes the creation of a broad united front of the left and the workers' movement against the fascist threat and the criminal activities of 'Chrysi Avgi' directed against immigrants and activists of the movement. It is necessary to develop initiatives aimed at exposing the deeply system-friendly and reactionary character of 'Chrysi Avgi', its fixation on EU and memoranda, its Nazi mentality and its pseudo-populist rhetoric in order to subvert its social base. ANTARSYA will immediately establish an initiative for a common approach in dealing with the fascist threat on the part of all social and political organizations of the workers' movement and the left (including KKE and SYRIZA), both at central and local levels.

"We will continue on the necessary path of the front of the anti-capitalist left and call on all forces and the militants who choose to break with the system and support the overthrow, to discuss openly, to act jointly and to cooperate in the elections. At the same time we continue the struggle for the further strengthening of ANTARSYA primarily by the struggles in the movements, but also in the next elections." (Excerpts from the declaration)

Racist incitement and chauvinism in the mass media over decades and through the official policies of racism as well as the evil governmental racism are responsible for the spreading of the fascist plague in Greece, which is only one step away from being transformed into a mass movement along the lines of the German Nazi Party before 1933. But the apathy and indifference of the political parties and organizations of the Left and the workers' movement have also greatly contributed to the rise of Nazi gang, and this responsibility is very serious. It is urgently necessary to reverse this disastrous trend. It may be that the specter of a left-wing government has appeared in Greece, but more serious is the drift of the social and political conditions into the direction of Weimar Republic. Greek capitalism and its bourgeois democracy have evoked this witching hour.

16th of May 2012

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The example of Argentina in 2001

Eric Toussaint

Like Argentina in 2001, Greece must break with the Troika and suspend payment of the debt. It is an urgent necessity for the social movements in Europe to show active, practical solidarity with the Greek people and to constitute a common European platform of resistance to austerity in order to obtain cancellation of illegitimate debts.

A large part of the Greek population has demonstrated, since the first memorandum in May 2010, increasing opposition to the measures of austerity imposed by the Greek authorities and the Troika: general strikes, occupation of public squares, street demonstrations, a movement of resistance to the increases in the prices of services and transport, without forgetting the re-launching by those who work in them of certain services, such as the hospital of Kilkis in Macedonia and the restarting on February 15, 2012 of publication of the *Eleftherotypia* daily newspaper under workers' control.

The submission and the collaboration of the Greek government with the troika only worsen the economic situation of the country and violate the economic and social rights of the population.

The latest plan, dishonestly labelled "rescue", represents one more stage in the abandonment of the sovereignty of Greece in relation to the European Union and to its creditors: all of the new credits will go to reimbursing a debt which is very largely illegitimate and the whole process will be managed directly by the creditors.

The people of the countries of the South were subjected for two decades (from 1982 to the beginning of the 2000s) to this kind of policy. It uses the pretext of the reimbursement of the debt as a weapon to destroy a series of social conquests which constitute fundamental economic and social rights.

Argentina is an emblematic case. After 25 years of neoliberal policies (1976-2001) and a succession of austerity plans conducted by the IMF, a popular rebellion broke out in December 2001 and led to the fall of the government. The new authorities unilaterally decreed the suspension of the reimbursement of the national debt in the form of bonds sold on the financial markets to the sum of 90 billion dollars. That has remained until today the biggest suspension of payment in history. After three years of suspension of payment, during which the government implemented a policy of economic revival and refused to follow the recommendations of the IMF, Argentina imposed on its creditors a reduction of debt of 65 per cent. At the end of December 2001, Argentina also suspended the reimbursement of its bilateral debt (to the sum of 6.5 billion dollars) to countries such as Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Britain ... allied in the Club of Paris. This suspension of payment has lasted for ten years and Argentina is doing very well. Between 2003 and 2012, its average annual rate of growth was 8 per cent. If Argentina had not suspended the reimbursement of the debt and if it had not refused the diktats of the IMF and other creditors, it would have been unable to take advantage from 2004-2005 of the increase of prices of the products that it exports on the world market. All its revenues would have been swallowed up by the reimbursement of the debt. Under popular pressure, the Argentinean authorities have refused the increases in the price of electricity, water, telecommunications, etc. that foreign multinationals and the IMF wanted to impose. The living conditions of Argentines have markedly improved and today European citizens are heading for the country in search of a decent job. The example of Argentina shows that by refusing to submit to the creditors and the IMF in order to pay a largely illegitimate debt you can hold your head high and improve the living conditions of the population.

As indicated at the beginning of this article, the struggle of the Greeks must not remain isolated. It is necessary to build a broad movement of solidarity and, along with all the peoples of Europe, build a front of resistance for the cancellation of illegitimate debt and the complete refounding of a Europe of the peoples, via a genuinely democratic constituent process.

This article was written for the Eleftherotipia workers' newspaper.

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Unite behind Syriza's anti-austerity programme

Editorial statement by Socialist Resistance, Britain

Socialist Resistance strongly welcomes the stunning vote achieved by Syriza in the Greek elections which put it second in the poll on a solidly anti-austerity platform. It is a vote which has shaken the Greek and European ruling classes and has opened up the possibility of Syriza emerging as the biggest single party in the new elections next month.

We also strongly support Syriza's five demands [1] which are an action programme for a united fight against austerity. They include the rejection of austerity and the bailout conditions imposed in March by the Troika. They call for a moratorium on debt payments and an international commission to audit the Greek debt, together with vigorous debt write-offs. They also call for taxing the rich, a radical redistribution of income and wealth, nationalisation of the banks, and a new industrial policy to rejuvenate the manufacturing sector. These measures exclude any deals with pro-austerity parties and are what are needed to begin the fight-back against the ravages of austerity - though more stress on green solutions would make it stronger.

There is, however, a serious problem, in the face of another election, which cannot be avoided. That is the issue of the unity of the Greek left. Before the election Syriza was the only organisation to call for the most obvious thing - a united anti-austerity platform and for a united anti-austerity government if the left won. Now the situation is even worse. In the upcoming election both the KKE and Antarsya (though the KKE more stridently) have already said that they will not only stand their own candidates but will give no support to, or would 'not prop up' a Syriza-led government if it were elected! This, they say, is because Syriza's platform is not a full revolutionary programme. But a more extensive programme is something that must be discussed and developed as the struggle advances and should not to be counterposed to the immediate needs of the struggle as it unfolds today.

This is a very dangerous situation. We could see an anti-austerity government either denied office - and the austerity continue with all its consequences - or opposed once taking office by other sections of the left! We therefore make the strongest possible appeal to all sections of the Greek left to unite behind Syriza in the upcoming elections and to unite behind a Syriza-led anti-austerity government if it is elected. This is exactly the reason for building broad organisations like Syriza - in order to unite the working class in this kind of situation.

Despite Syriza's continued rise in the polls it should not be assumed that victory in the next election is certain for the left. The EU élites have already made it clear that they will not only make the next election a referendum on the euro but that a second anti-austerity vote would mean the expulsion of Greece from the euro. Massive pressure is going to be applied to reinforce this ultimatum between now and election day.

It is very important that this ultimatum is rejected and the austerity offensive opposed. Syriza has made it clear that whilst it is not calling for exit from the euro, if this is the consequence of defeating the austerity drive, because of the actions of the EU élites, then so be it. It is the same with the debt, for which the Greek workers should take no responsibility. In order to advocate debt repudiation effectively you have to be prepared for expulsion from the

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Eurozone as a probable consequence. This approach needs to be strongly up-front in the election campaign if the electorate is to be armed against the threats and ultimatums it will be facing.

The struggle of the Greek working class is a struggle for the workers' movement across Europe. [2]

Socialist Resistance is the British section of the Fourth International.

[1] The five demands are : * The immediate cancellation of all impending measures that will impoverish Greeks further, such as cuts to pensions and salaries.

* The immediate cancellation of all impending measures that undermine fundamental workers' rights, such as the abolition of collective labor agreements.

* The immediate abolition of a law granting MPs immunity from prosecution, reform of the electoral law and a general overhaul of the political system.

* An investigation into Greek banks, and the immediate publication of the audit performed on the Greek banking sector by BlackRock.

* The setting up of an international auditing committee to investigate the causes of Greece's public deficit, with a moratorium on all debt servicing until the findings of the audit are published.

The main points of Syriza's election programme can be found [here](#).

[2] Socialist Resistance calls to sign the statement of solidarity with the people of Greece backed by trade union leaders, members of Parliament and campaigners which can be found on the [Coalition of Resistance website](#) .