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Exchange between the FI Bureau and OKDE-Spartakos (Greek section)

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Description:

Following the elections in Greece on the 6th of May the Bureau of the Fourth International published a statement "The future of the workers of Europe is being decided in Greece" available [here](#). OKDE-Spartakos, the Greek section of the Fourth International wrote to give their opinion on this statement. Their letter and a reply by the Bureau are published below.

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Answer to the Central Committee of the OKDE-Spartakos (Greek section of the Fourth International)

Dear comrades,

First of all, we should say we should have consulted you before publishing the declaration of the Bureau of the International. So this is noted.

It is the urgency of the situation as well as the need to mark our solidarity with the Greek people and all the radical left which pushed us to react quickly.

We don't agree with your reaction to the declaration.

It does not deal with your orientation or your party-building choices. We do not deal with Antarsya's relations with Syriza, nor the electoral question, nor the problems of characterization of Syriza, nor what should be an overall transitional approach. On all these questions opinions are divided in the International, and even in the Greek section.

We tackle only one question: given the campaign of the "troika" against Syriza which refuses to apply these same austerity plans should we or should we not support Syriza in this opposition to the current policy of the Greek ruling class and that of the European Union? Our answer, like that of almost all the sections of the International, is clear: it is necessary to support Syriza, which so far has been opposed to the austerity policies, notably by refusing to constitute or support a government applying these policies.

You then take up another question returning to the formulations of the five principal demands of Syriza by explaining that these are not transitional demands. We know that Syriza is a coalition dominated by left reformists. We know that they do not share our conception of the transitional programme. It is true also that the formulations of Syriza's demands are often changed, but beyond the formulations, they reject the EU "Memorandum", commit to a moratorium on the debt, reject the austerity measures already applied, and in particular, so far, refuse any agreement with the plans of the EU. This position which, over and above the many variations in the declarations of leaders of Syriza, has been officially reaffirmed it seems. [1]

By definition, a transitional demand is not often (even generally) explicitly anticapitalist, since it starts from the really existing level of consciousness: it must be from the start considered legitimate by a broad part of the population. It is the fight for its implementation, in a situation of open crisis, which "reveals" its anticapitalist implications and makes it possible to raise the level of consciousness and struggle. From our point of view, the rejection of the memorandum and austerity measures, the moratorium on the debt for its cancellation - at least for the greatest part - can indeed correspond to the level of consciousness present while constituting a breaking point making it possible for a transitory dynamic to start up.

Exchange between the FI Bureau and OKDE-Spartakos (Greek section)

Once again, under these conditions, should we or should we not support this policy? Should we or should we not participate in solidarity with the Greek people and this refusal by Syriza, supported by all the Greek and international radical left? Our answer, is, yes, we must be in solidarity.

This is what the declaration says, neither more nor less. The pressures from the ruling classes are enormous. It is probable that differentiations will appear, that there will be reorganizations of the left, and we must be attentive to all that, but at this stage, Syriza holds good, and they should be supported, because we will be listened to by their militants and their voters to the extent that we have supported them against the enemies of the Greek people. We do not think that a policy which, in the name of future possible treasons, leads revolutionaries to be opposed to Syriza is a good one. We prefer a unitive policy, unity of the organisations of the radical left, trade-union unity, and unity of the grassroots movement, in particular by encouraging and supporting all the experiences of self-organisation. This is also the meaning of our stance in favour of a convergence of Syriza, Antarsya and KKE, and in the perspective of a left anti-austerity government. It is in any case a proposal to discuss in order to oppose an anti-austerity block to ND and the PASOK.

We know that the obstacles to this unitive policy are enormous, in particular because of the policy of the KKE, but faced with the scope of the captialist attacks there is not other path than to propose the path and means of workers' unity.

This perspective must combine with the coming together of all the anticapitalists who are in Antarsya but also in certain sectors of Syriza and beyond and in the trade union and associative movements.

Given the importance of Greece, the discussion will continue. It should tackle all the questions, but in such a situation, it is duty of revolutionaries and the Fourth International to seek the ways to carry out a unitive and anticapitalist policy.

Bureau of the Fourth International

6th of June

Dear comrades of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International,

A few days ago we received in the mailing list of the bureaus an e-mail containing a link to your statement "The future of the workers of Europe is being decided in Greece", which is published on the site of the International Viewpoint.

It was a big surprise for us to realize that it was a statement concerning Greece and the social, class struggles that are taking place in the country during the last 2.5 years, without any attempt to ask the Greek section or at least some of its members beforehand. Something like this should have happened even for your own information, as we can detect inaccuracies in the statement's content and references to political positions (of SYRIZA) that are not valid any more. This exposes the Executive Bureau's deficient knowledge of these subjects, but it exposes even more the lack of coordination within the FI. We want to underline that it is not the first time that our section is ostentatiously ignored and that decisions concerning the movement and the political environment we act in are taken without asking us about the section's positions, without even expressing any interest in what its political decisions are and what problems a statement which is opposed to those decisions may create. OKDE-Spartacos is a political organization with a leadership and with collective processes by which it decides its political directions and planning. If anything, you should be interested in this planning. It is not always easy for us to translate our texts in other languages, however the FI's role remains to coordinate all sections in order to avoid misunderstandings, errors and distortions.

Exchange between the FI Bureau and OKDE-Spartakos (Greek section)

Dear comrades, you know that the Greek section has taken the political decision to participate in the Unitarian anti-capitalist left project of ANTARSYA. We are building this front confronting consistently its contradictions as well as the political disagreements and the different political traditions there are within it. We spend much of our political and personal time working for the reinforcement and for the success of this anti-capitalist left front by applying its planning, in which OKDE-Spartakos itself has contributed. As you can easily understand, therefore, a statement such as the one published on the IV leads to questioning our political decisions and our organization's credibility in the eyes of our allies, it deprives us of the support of our international organization and it displays our international as if it were a pendulum, swinging according to the (electoral) wind. In this way it undermines our effort to make ANTARSYA approach the International.

To be more concrete, you focus on and you propose as a spearhead of the political struggle in Greece the 5-point emergency plan of SYRIZA, with which its leadership has negotiated with New Democracy, PASOK, the Independent Greeks and the Democratic Left to form a government. This plan includes, for example, point 4 about abolition of immunity of ministers from prosecution, a demand which is irrelevant for the left and was put onto the agenda by the populist and the far right. By the way, these 5 points have recently been reconsidered by SYRIZA itself, which is continuously yielding to the pressures applied by the dominant class. The newest official development is that SYRIZA doesn't promise any more to unilaterally abort the memorandum, but to replace it by a new national economic plan renegotiating with creditors and the EU. SYRIZA doesn't speak about nationalization of banks (let alone workers' control), but about "public control" by the state. This is something different from point 2 of Syriza's five point agenda, which, by the way, concerns only those banks that have already received generous help from the state. It is really a question about which demand we consider to be a transitional demand: the three year moratorium of payoffs which SYRIZA proposes or the cancellation of the debt advanced by ANTARSYA? Who is going to be asked to pay for the debt after those three years? Unless we think that nowadays, in the middle of the biggest crisis of capitalism after World War II and in a country that has been living under class war conditions for 3 years, a transitional program would be a luxury and that what we need instead is simply a bourgeois-democratic "emergency plan".

It is astonishing that the statement doesn't even propose a critical vote or an effort for a programmatic agreement, but a total political alignment with SYRIZA and its emergency plan!

We all realize the importance that the formation of a government to the left of social-democracy in the next election would have for working people in Greece and all over Europe. Such a fact could improve their self-confidence and contribute, under certain circumstances, to a further rise of struggles. However, SYRIZA does its best in order to prevent the development of such a process in favor of working people. The only hope for something like this to happen is for a credible anti-capitalist force to its left to exist. Otherwise, after some months a possible SYRIZA government will collapse leaving an open field for a right-wing government, like has happened in other cases in Europe (Italy...), or, even worse, for a far right turn. We think it is crucial for the Greek anti-capitalist left and particularly for ANTARSYA to go on with a united front tactic, but at the same time it should preserve its political independence and the anti-capitalist transitional program by which it has carried out difficult struggles in trade unions, workplaces and among the youth. ANTARSYA shouldn't turn into one more left force that tails after reformist administrative illusions. Comrades, an anti-capitalist left exist in Greece, and it cannot negate itself in the name of 5 points that set aside the unilateral rejection of the memoranda, the cancellation of all debt and the nationalization of banks and big enterprises under workers control.

It is significant that while you are asking Greek workers to vote for a left government that would abolish the memoranda and all reactionary labour counter-reforms, SYRIZA has already started to speak about a renegotiation of the memoranda so as not to lose votes, yielding to the pressures of mass media and the dominant class. It is enough to say that the president of SYRIZA has proposed as prime minister of the transitional government G. Arsenis, a former Minister of Education of PASOK who was a devoted enemy of working people, the youth and the large-scale movement that resisted his reforms and who was responsible for thousands of unemployed teachers and for the accentuation of barriers against working class children and poor strata trying to enter second-grade or

Exchange between the FI Bureau and OKDE-Spartakos (Greek section)

third-grade education (we just wonder, where means to an end should stop?). One more example: SYRIZA doesn't promise any more to cancel all cuts, but just to restore wages to the level they were at before February, which is after two years of austerity and of social struggles (this makes a lower salary of 751 euro, obligatory fund contributions and taxes included...). Despite all this, ANTARSYA met SYRIZA and agreed to cooperate and march together in the struggles. However, in case of a left government, ANTARSYA will take a critical stance, supporting progressive measures and actively opposing any retreat.

We are in agreement with the struggle for the United Socialist States of Europe. But how can this happen? By defending the "EU of the peoples" and its bourgeois supranational mechanisms, like the reformist left does, or by a class struggle in European-scale coordination in order to destroy the EU? By concealing or by revealing in the eyes of working people and the unemployed masses that the EU serves the interests of international Capital and squeezes workers, a majority of whom still consider it a progressive institution? Euro-zone, the Euro currency and austerity policies that have accompanied their existence since the very beginning are not something to be fought against by workers in Greece and all around Europe? Will the EU disintegrate by itself or must the working classes of Europe challenge it, having a counter proposal instead?

Unfortunately we realize with anguish that the Fourth International is not capable of playing the role it should play in this historical period and we wonder where we are going... Although the Fourth International is an international coordination of small revolutionary organizations around the globe, its word and its statements have considerable weight and resonance among the international workers vanguard which is getting ever more massive and politicized. It should offer an orientation, with all the forces at its disposal, for the accomplishment of a transitional program that breaks with capitalism. This is even more valid for Greece, where the rise of workers' movements puts on the agenda aspects of such a program, as happened last October, when we had the first signs of a direct challenge against the employer's managerial prerogative, with all public services occupied by workers. The Fourth International should cultivate the conviction that revolution is possible today.

On behalf of the Central Committee of OKDE-Spartakos (Greek section of the Fourth International)

[1] See in French [Syriza's economic manifesto for the next elections](#).