

# Greece: Tsipras got his gun, and it is ... the euro!

Sunday 28 October 2012, by [ELAFROS Yannis](#) (Date first published: 23 September 2012).

The appearance of SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras, the representative of the main opposition party at the September 15 gathering in Salonika, seriously tightened the noose around the prospect of SYRIZA being the party of the social movements and the Left. [1] The commitment to 'responsible' government and his grooming for the role of the "better-suited Prime Minister" shaped the Tsipras speech and news conference at the international fair.

The SYRIZA Chairman spoke about the need to stop the disastrous memoranda and sent a "patriotic and democratic call" to "all Greeks, to rebuild Greece." The "reconstruction of Greece" was the main theme and the speaker stressed right from the beginning the class collaborationist idea of "a productive reconstruction" of the country without winners and losers, and without taking into account the conflict of interest between workers and capital now so brutally evident. SYRIZA thus espouses the old idea of a 'social contract' within the framework of the capitalist system. It was noticeable that Tsipras focused on the proposal of SYRIZA for the short term during a rather long speech. He barely mentioned the need for an immediate counter-attack and a renewed upsurge of the mass movements. Socialism, even as a word, was completely absent. The more SYRIZA becomes a "big democratic party of the Left", the more it does not resemble PASOK (history repeats itself only as farce) [2], but still revives old illusions about change - if only aimed at overcoming the memoranda policies - without breaking with the system and without social upheaval.

Let's take a closer look at the chairman's speech. "In this election, we have missed the opportunity to have a government today that could win everything the Greek people are entitled to achieve, and what others have won at the last summit on June 26." For instance, the "Prime Minister of Italy", who "has achieved the direct recapitalization of banks with no burden on the public debt"! This was one of the first answers at the news conference, and a glorification of the Italian banker, Prime Minister, Mario Monti. An agreement leading Italy to the Golgotha of the memoranda, as clearly expressed in the decision of the summit, is presented as a success! Does Tsipras actually contemplate such loan conditions?

"SYRIZA-EKM (the official party name) stands for economic, social and geopolitical stability", Tsipras shouted from the stage of the Velidio - the hall bathed in deep red. Thus he gave a guarantee to all concerned about stability. But how will SYRIZA deal with the debt problem? "We are for a negotiated delay (that is, not a unilateral termination) of the interest payments of the external debt and the elimination of a significant portion of the debt, as well as the payment of the remaining debts with inclusion of a clause for economic growth. If current memoranda policies are continued as such, Greece will collapse and the lenders will lose their money!"

At the news conference, the chairman was even more explicit: "We are talking about a model like Germany in 1953, which means a haircut, and at the same time a moratorium including a clause for economic growth. We are not people who do not pay off their debts (in Greek: batahtsides)." But by employing the stock expressions of the troika watch-dogs, Tsipras rejects the position of all who demand an end to the payments and insist on debt cancellation. Thus Tsipras is opposed to those who consider that the debt has been paid thousands of times, that it is unjust, that it is imperialist,

and favors capitalist interests in an extreme way. This includes not a few people who voted for SYRIZA, but for whom the criterion was not that the lenders might lose their money!

But to pay off the debt, the government budget must be stable, as the troika and the EU loudly proclaim. Hence workers have to suffer the bloody austerity programs. Sure, SYRIZA suggests another variation. It talks about ... fiscal consolidation that should be "socially just and viable". But in order to reach the goal of the average revenue of the euro-zone, where Greece is lagging behind 4%, apparently taxes must be increased. But no further information is provided as to how this should be done. The acceptance of the conditions and criteria of neo-liberal models leads, as the economic staff of SYN (the leading left-reformist party of the SYRIZA - alliance) suggest, inexorably in the direction of system - management.

But how can the replacement of the memorandum and the debt - moratorium be accomplished? Here Tsipras not only refrained from emphasizing the importance of the popular movements and the possibility of stopping the payments. He even proposed to the workers to use homeopathic methods. The euro and the EU have proved in practice to be not only excellent weapons for the attacks of Greek capital, but also key instruments in the degradation of workers across Europe. Nevertheless, Tsipras argued that Greece has gained "a powerful leverage in the negotiations" due to its participation in the euro-zone, and he added: "If Greece did not have the euro, the country would have been left to its fate much sooner than we think. As the International Monetary Fund did with Argentina. Thus, certain people who preceded Mr Samaras would have fled by helicopter." Just because Greece is chained much more to the cause of capitalist integration due to the single currency, European capital does not relent. It is determined to enforce its policies in alliance with the Greek bourgeoisie. Should we rejoice, or is there need for anti-capitalist disengagement from the EU?

But Tsipras has no such concerns: "The role of SYRIZA today is not to dissolve the European unity. SYRIZA should help to correct the winding path of European integration, which so far has been determined by the dominant interests." His euro-loyalty and his demonstrably "responsible" attitude also led to a meeting with the head of the European task force, Horst Reichenbach. The SYRIZA delegation gave assurances of "its intention to maintain permanent contacts with the EU institutions", as opposed to the previous attitude towards the troika. The "readiness to govern" requires certain sacrifices.

Particularly striking is the complete absence of anti-big business proposals regarding all social and economic aspects of the country. Instead of demanding the nationalization of large enterprises of strategic importance, and the cancellation of previous privatizations, and instead of targeting the insatiable greed of capital on all levels, the SYRIZA chairman spoke of a "coordinated development of the public, private and social sectors of the economy!"

Striking was also the absence of any reference to the question of the NATO bases, presumably in the interest of 'stability'. Concerning his upcoming meeting with Israeli President Shimon Peres, Tsipras said he does not agree with strategic and military cooperation with Israel, but he mentioned trade and mutually beneficial relations. He characterized as a "pilot" project what Cyprus and its Prime Minister Christofias have arranged with respect to hydrocarbon resource development, although Cyprus has entered into a strategic alliance with the terrorist state.

In this framework, not surprising is how Tsipras answered the question about SYRIZA's stance on the development of the social movements. He said that "no party presses buttons" to get people to take to the streets. He hastened to add: "Do not forget that we have introduced three legislative proposals, the government, with great difficulty, only two!"

But the intervention of Tsipras at the international fair has generated sharp reactions within SYRIZA. DEA [3] noted in a statement of its Central Committee that it is a central task of SYRIZA to promote the unity of action of the left to fight the attacks of capital. According to DEA, “the slogan, no sacrifices for the euro” and the statement that “the euro is not a taboo” are the “minimal bases of unity of SYRIZA.”

The problem of SYRIZA has deeper causes, of course. The leadership has opted for a peaceful transfer of power via the expected disintegration of the coalition government of the three parties. The SYRIZA leadership seems unaware that the intensification of class struggle will lead to unprecedented challenges, opportunities, and risks for the workers and for the entire left. At the same time, the evolution of the crisis in the euro-zone and the EU refutes relentlessly the illusions of the euro-reformist left in a change of political direction - just see how fast Hollande has turned into “Olandreou”. It also means that the supposedly life-saving proposals, like the use of the European Central Bank as the last refuge, the euro-bonds, euro deposits, etc., are becoming meaningless - just part of the reactionary logic to consolidate the EU at the expense of the peoples of Europe.

Essentially, the depth of the historical crisis of totalitarian capitalism today is the decisive reason for the impossibility of a consensual social contract and of a corresponding social democratic left. The dilemma of “socialism or barbarism,” and that involves the dilemma of a Left for the overthrow of the system or a left that is integrated into it, characterizes our time. All militants of the movement must have a clear position on this issue.

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**P.S.**

\* This article is a translation from PRIN, the weekly newspaper of NAR, Sep 23, 2012. NAR is one of the organizations involved in ANTARSYA.

\* Translation: A. Kloke.

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## **Footnotes**

[1] Since the elections of June 26, Greece is governed by a three party coalition government of right-wing Nea Dimokratia, former social democratic PASOK and DIMAR, a very right-wing “left” party. SYRIZA is a left alliance that gained almost 27% in the June elections and claims to represent the alternative of a future left government in order to show an exit from the terrific crisis that shatters the Greek economy and society and provokes misery and even the rise of fascism. Every year in September at the international Salonika fair, the Greek Prime Minister and some days later the chairman of the main opposition party outline their political proposals and prospects for the next future.

[2] PASOK is the “socialist” party that led Greece into the disaster of the memoranda policies after the elections of October 2009. G. Papandreou was the Prime Minister who delivered the country to the “memoranda policies”, the deadly proposals of the troika. The troika consists of the EU commission of Brussels (in fact the organ of the big capitalist EU states, mainly Germany and France), the European Central Bank and the IMF. Since that time Greece suffers from a

dictatorship of the creditors and the virtually unlimited despotism of big capital.

[3] DEA is an organization that stems from a split from the Greek IS and has fraternal relations with the American group, the ISO. Like some other far left organizations, DEA is part of the SYRIZA alliance.