

Greece: The Left after Syriza

Wednesday 6 January 2016, by [NTAVANELLOS \(DAVANELLOS\) Antonis](#), [SHAWKI Ahmed](#) (Date first published: October 2015).

Exclusive interview with Antonis Davanellos, leading member of Greece's Popular Unity and the International Workers' Left (DEA).

Less than a year ago, in January 2015, Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) stunned the world by resoundingly defeating Greece's traditional bourgeois parties and forming a new government based on a program of resisting and reversing the austerity regime imposed in 2010 by the infamous Troika (consisting of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission).

But within a month, Syriza leader and new Greek president Alex Tsipras and his appointed negotiating team were already backtracking, accepting a February 20 agreement that committed Greece to further austerity cuts and, without definite guarantees of financial assistance from the European lenders, to suspending and submitting to European review all domestic measures designed to ease the burden of austerity. Tsipras's path toward capitulation produced a wave of anger and debate within Syriza, whose left wing, grouped mainly around the Left

Platform, pushed hard against the sudden retreat. Increasingly distancing himself from, and marginalizing, the party's left wing, Tsipras finally secured an agreement with Greece's lenders on July 12, and quickly secured a majority parliamentary vote for its acceptance. The new, third memorandum requires Greece to impose further steep social spending and pension cuts, as well as privatizations of \$50 billion worth of state assets.

Tsipras's surrender prompted an exodus of much of the Left from Syriza—which makes up as much as 40 percent of the membership—some of which reformed as a new anti-austerity coalition called Popular Unity, with support of the Left Platform under the leadership of Panagiotis Lafazanis, and International Workers' Left (DEA), as well as other groupings. Hoping to quickly consolidate his position, Tsipras called a quick presidential election for September 20, giving Popular Unity a scant few weeks to organize and to prepare for the campaign. Partly as a result of this and for other reasons elaborated below, Tsipras won a resounding victory, gaining 35.5 percent of the vote and 145 seats—only five fewer than in January—whereas Popular Unity was unable to reach the 3 percent threshold required to win seats in parliament. It is worth noting, however, that the abstention rate in this election was 44 percent, up from 36.4 percent in the January elections and the highest abstention rate since the end of the dictatorship in 1974.

Antonis Davanellos, a leading member of the organization International Workers' Left (DEA), which was part of Syriza and is now a leader in Popular Unity, analyzes the rise and fall of Syriza and the tasks of the revolutionary left in Greece today. He was interviewed in early October by Ahmed Shawki, of the ISR editorial board.

The Editors, ISR

Ahmed Shawki - What are some of the lessons that we should draw from the experience of Syriza and the role the Left played within it?

Antonis Davanellos - We are living through a very difficult time; a time of the collapse of a project—Syriza—that the Left devoted great effort to building. It is also a time of difficulty for the Left leaving Syriza to create Popular Unity, which had been defeated in the recent elections. And at such difficult times, many inexperienced comrades can easily fall prey to the thought that all is lost. In times like this, some sectarians take the opportunity to say the effort to create and build Syriza was wrong from the beginning, and that it was harmful for the movement, for the working class, from its inception. That is not the case. We are very happy, and in reality proud, of the role we have played from the period of the creation of Syriza in 2004 until its electoral victory in January of this year.

Syriza was a concrete product of the class struggle in Greece and the huge efforts of a part of the Left in Greece to resist neoliberalism and austerity. It was also a product of the antiglobalization movement as well as the antiwar movement, both of which in Greece took on huge proportions. As these struggles in the streets and the workplaces developed, it became increasingly clear that this struggle was a political struggle, and that we needed a tool, a coalition or a party, to continue the fight politically. The answer to this need was Syriza. From the beginning it played not only an electoral role, but also a very important role in the escalation of the fight and the resistance of the working class during the crisis and after. It provoked a wave of hope in the working class and the popular masses, and it also provoked a wave of fear in the ruling class. Whoever does not believe this should examine the mainstream bourgeois newspapers from this period, and more recently during the period prior to the elections this year. The ruling class has made a huge effort to defeat Syriza.

One of the most outstanding achievements of Syriza was its role in developing a large layer of left activists and militants capable of collaborating and acting together, overcoming the fragmentation so common on the Left in many other countries in Europe and North America. We were able to unite through practical struggle and organizational collaboration a large layer of militants and activists connected with Marxism, with socialism, and to build the conditions on which to function as a more united Left. That layer has been defeated but not destroyed. The depth of the defeat is still to be determined, but this layer has not been destroyed, and in the coming months this layer will continue to regroup and chart a new course for the Left in Greece. That's why we think that all we have done during over the past decade was very useful, and we don't regret it.

However, having said that, we must also say that creating Syriza and participating in it, for us as revolutionaries, was not based on an illusion that we can create a homogenous, united party with reformist or semi-reformist, or what we usually called centrist, parts of the Left. That's why we have participated in Syriza in a particular and concrete way. The most difficult but necessary decision that we took inside Syriza was not to dissolve our organization. Even during the period when Syriza was in its most leftist phase, and where there was a strong feeling of unity among its members, a feeling of unity that we were part of—even at that moment we did not dissolve our organization.

We played a role in developing and elaborating the rules of this unity, but at the same time we did not agree to dissolve our organization because we knew that strategic and political differences always matter, and there are times in the class struggle where these differences can be decisive.

We maintained our own organization not only to protect and preserve our own political integrity, but also the political integrity and independence of the most radical militants inside Syriza who were not members of DEA. Very early, at the time of Syriza's most left orientation, we insisted on the need to organize a left opposition, the Left Platform, inside Syriza. That's why we were able to mobilize the Left forces inside Syriza to react quickly and decisively to the compromises of Tsipras as they took place in the months after Syriza's election victory in January. One well-known European Marxist, I think Perry Anderson, wrote in July that the compromise of Tsipras with the ruling class and the European leadership can be compared with the Social Democrats' betrayal a century ago in 1914, when they voted in the German Reichstag for war credits. In the same vein, the position of the left opposition inside Syriza can be compared with Liebknecht's "no" vote, which saved the honor of the left of the party at that time.

Our quick response was not the product of a night or a week of work; it was the result of the concrete fight inside the party that we, along with the other members of the Left Platform, had been waging for some time inside the party—a fight that was carried out in the full view of the public. Everybody knew that this struggle had been taking place inside Syriza over the past three years. I must underline here that the bourgeois newspapers and the bourgeois parties in Greece insisted repeatedly that the precondition for their recognition of Tsipras as a leader of the Greek state was his expulsion of the Left Platform.

So that was how we approached our work in Syriza. It was not an easy struggle, but the fruit of our work can be seen at many levels. Before Syriza, the Greek Left was very fragmented and sectarian. Our work in Syriza changed all this. In a way, even the creation of Antarsya (Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left)—a far-left coalition that refused to join Syriza—is a result of this change. Before Syriza, Antarsya did not exist: NAR (New Left Current) had its own little front, SEK (Socialist Workers' Party) had its own little front, and each group on the revolutionary left was working separately, hoping that it would become dominant. So to repeat: the most important development since the formation of Syriza has been that through the struggles and the political confrontation that the Left has organized in Greece, there is a big layer of militants and cadres across the country that could prove to be very important in the coming months.

You mentioned that the formation of Syriza as a party was preceded by a period of common work and discussion—could you elaborate on that, and say something about the different organizations and forces involved in its creation?

Syriza emerged from the development of the antiwar and antiglobalization movements, particularly the Greek Social Forum and the huge success of the mobilization that the Forum organized during the Greek presidency of the European Union in 2003. The mass protests during the G-8 summit in Genoa in July 2001 ignited a big discussion in the antiglobalization movement. The violence of the state was so obvious that the question of how to proceed was very important. At the time some parts of the movement returned, saying, "We must continue the mobilization but without violence, without provoking state action." Another part of the movement understood—correctly, in my opinion—that the way forward was to transform our mobilizations, but also to organize united political action. That was the basis for the creation of the Space of Common Action and Dialogue of the Left.

All the forces that had been active inside the Greek Social Forum took part in this dialogue. Synaspismos, a reformist party rooted primarily in the Eurocommunist tradition was one of its participants. Here there is a bizarre point. It is true that the political tradition of Synaspismos was Eurocommunism, but in reality the majority of its members were coming from the Stalinist, Soviet-oriented Communist Party of Greece, after it split in the early 1990s. So we had Synaspismos, which was a left-Eurocommunist current, AKOA (Renewing Communist Ecological Left), some movement organizations, and us—DEA. In addition, a small organization coming out of the Communist Party,

KEDA, with some well-known former leaders of the Communist Party at the time also participated in the dialogue.

Those discussions created the first unitary formation of Syriza. The successes of the first period drove us to enlarge of Syriza. The Maoist organization KOE (Communist Organization of Greece) entered. The Greek section of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) came in but soon after they went out again. The Network for Political and Civil Rights created a political group and through this they also participated in Syriza.

For many years Syriza functioned as a coalition of organizations. But in the development of our struggle it became clear that we needed common local organizations and common functioning. DEA participated in the elaboration of the rules that transformed Syriza into something more than a coalition of organizations. As a result of these changes, Syriza became a unitary organization based on the principle that all the members of the organization were now members of the new so-called party, whose main organizational principle was one member, one vote. Decision-making was based on majority rule, with major decisions requiring a two-thirds majority. To arrive at this point it was necessary to build trust between everybody. As a result, it was not until after the 2012 elections that the new rules went into effect. The first conference of Syriza was held in 2013, almost ten years after its founding. Until then, Syriza had conferences but no membership voting—after discussions, decisions were made by consensus between the participating organizations.

That was the march toward the unitary party. In that 2013 conference Tsipras put a lot of pressure on DEA to dissolve itself. We refused. All the other organizations accepted—in a way frankly, and in a way not frankly: publicly they dissolved their organizations, but in reality they did not.

How did the discussion of the workers government and the idea of a “government of the Left” begin to take shape?

These developments were products of the class struggle in Greece. Between 2010 and 2012 you had a huge escalation of the resistance of workers and the popular masses. This resistance had moments with very high levels of confrontation with the government and the state. Demonstrators were attacked in front of parliament, confronted by the brute force of police special forces and other specialized forces of repression, including facing tear gas and stun grenades. Through this experience it became obvious that to protect working-class and social rights we needed to overthrow the government, and to overthrow the government we need to answer the question: After the government of the memorandum, what? Discussions inside Syriza produced an answer: a “government of the Left.” It was not clear what that meant at the time. We accepted this perspective, trying to put into practice the tradition of the Fourth Congress of the Third (Communist) International. We saw in the proposal for a left government a process of escalation in the class struggle—not the end goal of the class struggle, but more as a transitional tactic toward socialism. We knew that the majority in Syriza did not see things in the same way, but the only way to participate in this movement and in this development was in a concrete way: to be inside and fight for our ideas, for our politics and for our perspectives.

How do you account for Tsipras’s capitulation to the creditors? Was he forced into it, as some are arguing?

Many comrades internationally who don't know all the details of the situation think that Tsipras did his utmost to resist the pressure from European leaders to sign a new austerity memorandum. According to this view, Tsipras accepted the Third Memorandum primarily because European leaders, the IMF, and the Troika blackmailed him. This is not exactly the case. The plan agreed at the first conference of Syriza was to stop austerity and overthrow the memorandum. This has been

specified in the Thessaloniki program. The Thessaloniki program contained concrete measures that we promised would be put into practice immediately and unilaterally upon winning the elections, without waiting on discussions and negotiations with the European Union. As Tsipras said at the time, the only discussion and the only negotiations with Europe would be about the debt.

This plan had many difficulties, but it also had good points. However, it can't be properly evaluated because the leadership around Tsipras never put it into practice. One could make the case that the Tsipras leadership put up resistance against the alliance of the Greek ruling class and the international institutions if after the January elections it had increased wages, raised minimum pensions, protected public hospitals and schools, and halted privatizations—all things that we had promised in the program. If this had been the case, we are sure that a huge working-class and popular alliance could have been organized in order to protect the new government against blackmail by the lenders. But from the beginning, Tsipras's approach turned on the hope that a negotiated compromise could be achieved between the government, the Greek ruling class, and the international institutions.

I want to make a comment on the question of blackmail. The banks were the main instruments of blackmail. At the beginning of July, the main threat by Germany's finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble was, "If you will not accept the Third Memorandum we will leave you alone, the banks will collapse, and your own people will mobilize to bring you down." How did we arrive at this point? After the January elections, seeking a compromise with the Greek ruling class, the head of the right wing of Syriza, Yannis Dragasakis, who was put in charge of the banking system, facilitated a huge flight of capital from Greek banks to the international banks, and also into wildly speculative neoliberal investment schemes. After six months the vast majority of the money still held in Greek banks came from individual depositors rather than enterprises. Almost 100 percent of the cash in Greek banks at this point consisted of small accounts with less than 10,000 euro. Rich people had taken their money away. During the period when this was happening, Dragasakis and the government failed to sound the alarm and nothing was done to stem the hemorrhaging of funds, leaving the government in financial straits and in a weakened position in relation to the creditors.

The second, huge illusion of the Tsipras leadership was his conviction that through democracy, through winning the government in a small country, through elections, he could change the line of the European Union on how to confront the crisis. This illusion was very bitter because from the beginning Tsipras failed to take any concrete measure to oppose the intentions of the Europeans. After the first agreement of February 20, it was clear that Schäuble and the Troika were preparing the Third Memorandum. Nevertheless, Tsipras and Varoufakis signed the agreement, and continued to pay all the installments of the debt without getting a penny from the European Union. It was clear that at the end of this operation, when the last penny of the Greek public had been given to the international lenders, that a rotten compromise was an increasingly likely outcome. So that's the real answer as to how Tsipras and his little group "resisted" or was "blackmailed." It was the fruit of reformist illusions about the possibility of finding compromise with the Greek ruling class, and also the fruit of the reformist illusion towards the European Union.

It must be said that through this period the left of the party fought very hard to demand that Tsipras put all the concrete measures promised in our program into practice: to implement unilateral measures to ease the impact of the crisis in Greece, halt all debt payments, and nationalize the banks, as the only means of defense against the demands of the European Union. Not only inside the party, but also publicly, we were saying that Tsipras's approach would lead to defeat. So that's the real answer on this. The capitulation of July 13 was not objectively inevitable; it was not written down from the first moment; it was the result of the political direction of Tsipras—a direction premised on dialogue and consensus with the Greek ruling class and with the European and international leaderships.

The result of this was the Third Memorandum. The Third Memorandum is a disaster. Tsipras has signed an agreement that means the continuation of very hard austerity policies, including new attacks on the pension system with very heavy cuts, and a massive wave of privatization of areas which until now no one had dared to propose: local airports, big ports like Piraeus and Thessaloniki, public electricity, and public water. It's Latin America all over again—a Latin America moment. Today in the newspapers it was reported that the government has sold an island to a Russian oligarch, and per his request they have also sold the sea around the island. No boat can legally approach within a certain number of miles of this island. This is not just privatization—this is selling out, and that's the model they have accepted.

Internationally, there are comrades in some organizations that are defending Syriza by saying that Tsipras has been honest about being cornered into making a deal and hasn't tried to whitewash how bad it is. The truth is that it was obligatory for him to say this because people in Greece understand the nature of the agreement, and so there was no space to say that this is not a new austerity memorandum. That was because at the beginning inside the party of Syriza there was a strong opposition. Now all this is changing. Now you can see cadres of Syriza acting as apologists for these measures, arguing that they are the right things to do in a situation like this, and that even if the Troika didn't exist the government would still be compelled to make hard decisions. Since the September elections there is no anti-memorandum anti-austerity opposition inside the parliament with the exception of the Communist Party; and I will come back later to say what are its politics.

What is the situation in Syriza since the capitulation, the withdrawal of the Left, and the latest elections?

It must be clear and it must be understood internationally that Syriza hasn't just changed; Syriza has collapsed. Syriza as we knew it does not exist anymore. People must understand that it is not only the Left Platform that left the party. The Left Platform was very important because officially it had 33 percent of the members, but everybody knew we had more, around 40 percent, and it was the most organized, the most radical part of the opposition inside the party. But it was not just the Left Platform that walked out.

Comrades internationally must know that the general secretary of the party, Tassos Koronakis, who was traditionally a member of the Tsipras majority inside the party—that's why he became general secretary—resigned. Half of the elected members of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of Syriza, the highest elected body of leadership in Syriza, six of the twelve elected members of this organ, resigned and left. More than 50 percent of the members of the Central Committee of Syriza resigned. Well-known intellectuals, such as Christos Laskos and Andreas Karitzis, and Yiannis Milios, people who some years ago were the best known intellectuals of Tsipras's majority—the people defending Tsipras's line against the criticisms of the Left Platform—resigned. Some of them, like Milios, are fighting alongside us now, and some others, like Krisos Laskos, are trying to organize other forms of opposition to the memorandum policies of Syriza.

After this split, what was left of the party could not function like the old Syriza. For example, after the wave of resignations, it was not possible for Tsipras to poll for a central committee. So he created a new organ and called it Organ for Political Responsibility. This body is not in Syriza's constitution, and is really just a list of people chosen by Tsipras to make decisions. There is no party legality in any of this functioning. In reality the functioning of Syriza now is based on the leadership of the government. The only leading authority is the office of the prime minister. And not by chance, the leading group around Tsipras has found the opportunity immediately after that split to bring into Syriza some very well known ex-social democrats, people he had proposed for membership many times before but the party had rejected. Theodora Jakri became second minister specializing in industry. She and Markos Bolaris, who has also been brought into Syriza's leadership, were PASOK-

affiliated government ministers during the first memorandum period and supported the first wave of austerity. These are the signs of a big turn.

To give you a little bit of the current atmosphere inside Syriza, the first alliance between Syriza and the right-wing populist party ANEL was presented in January as something Tsipras was forced to do in order to gain sufficient seats in parliament to form a government. This time it's not being presented as obligatory; it's now a huge friendship, and anyone that saw the kisses between Tsipras, Nikos Pappas, and ANEL's leader Panos Kammenos, could feel the real difference. Syriza is another kind of party from what we knew.

Why did Tsipras call new elections, and what accounts, after all his betrayals, for Tsipras's victory in the last elections?

You must understand, Tsipras is saying that he called for elections because the Left Platform voted "no" to his proposals, eliminating his parliamentary majority. This is only partially true. The government did not fall because of these votes—New Democracy and PASOK were voting with Tsipras and more than made up for the loss of the other votes. So in a way, there was a great deal of parliamentary stability. Tsipras called for elections because he knew he could not renew his authority inside the party. He decided on the elections not just to expel the Left Platform, but also to change the whole party. He dissolved the party to win his government. That is the real reason, and that is very well known and understood almost by everyone, including people who are inside Syriza now—even including ministers in the government.

But the question remains: why did he win the election? One answer is obvious. The simplest explanation is that Tsipras this time had no opposition from the regime, from the Greek ruling class. On the contrary, the regime, through the mass media, supported Tsipras against the Left; not against New Democracy, but against the left of his party. There was a clear line in the mass media on this. And it is very interesting that this maneuver of Tsipras to call elections to solve the problem of the party had the support of international institutions. Merkel stated publicly that the elections were not part of the problem but part of the solution in Greece. So Tsipras had the support of the international leaderships and the Greek ruling class.

Then there is the question of how quickly our side had to reorganize and prepare for the elections. We had twenty days to finish a split, organize a new party, and organize a campaign. It was not a fair playing field. But that's not the real answer. The real answer is that September 2015 is very close to January 2015, and that means that while political positions of large parts of the population were changing, they were not changing fast enough to be reflected electorally. So a part of the success of Tsipras can be explained because he presented himself as a representative of the continuity of Syriza, a continuity from January, a continuity of the confrontation with New Democracy.

There is another explanation that is even more important. When the majority of the population—the majority of the working class and popular forces—saw that Tsipras had signed the memorandum, and that Syriza had collapsed, they had no hope for an overthrow of the memorandum. So they voted with this criterion: Who will impose the memorandum the least harshly? The real dilemma for a large part of the population was: What is better? To have Tsipras impose the memorandum or to have Vangelis Meimarakis, the leader of New Democracy, impose the memorandum? A big part of the population voted using this criterion, and fearing that the return of New Democracy could result in a wave of revenge, of bigger austerity, and bigger oppression, so they chose Tsipras. There are many examples of people saying to us, "We are proud of what we have done, we will be with you in the struggles to come, but we will vote for Syriza."

A small part of the answer as to why Tsipras won the last election also has to do with concrete

political mistakes made by the Left Platform, mainly on the question of what line to take on the necessity of the confrontation with the European leaderships and the possibility of an exit from the Eurozone. Rather than focusing on reversing the austerity of the Third Memorandum, the main focus of Popular Unity's campaign message emphasized the necessity of an exit from the Eurozone and the adoption of the drachma. But the question of currency and whether or not Greece breaks with the euro is a secondary question, and by itself is not a solution to the crisis conditions faced by the Greek working class. The position taken by DEA on this question was expressed in a joint statement I signed along with Olivier Besançon of the New Anticapitalist Party in France, and Miguel Urbán Crespo of Podemos in Spain:

"For us, what is most critical is to end the policy of austerity, be it within the framework of the euro if the situation permits it, or outside it if the people cannot achieve their aspirations. We do not confuse the means with the ends—we are not partisans of this or that currency—because the real question before us is to know who controls the monetary system. Whether the credit system is based on a national or European currency does not change much as long as either of these remain under the influence of the traditional groups of the financial speculators who make up their own banking laws.

If we call for a Grexit from the Eurozone in isolation from the question of fighting austerity, then our opponents can paint us as supporters of the worsening of conditions for the Greek people. Moreover, debates about whether a Grexit will strengthen the Greek economy without connecting it to who still runs that economy—the Greek ruling-class—leads into a dead end. DEA argues, as the statement does, that the question of whether Greece remains in or out of the Eurozone has to start with the fight against austerity, and point in a clear direction toward socialism."

What has been the attitude of the Greek Communist Party and the anticapitalist coalition Antarsya toward working with Popular Unity?

Throughout this period of crisis, the Communist Party of Greece has told the workers that it is not possible to change the balance of forces at this moment. We cannot win, it argues, so what can we do? Vote carefully, vote for the Communist Party, it argues, and when the party becomes stronger, we will see. That's their real line, and around this argument they are ready to do everything. In this election, for example, the main enemy for the Communist Party was Popular Unity. Its main attacks, even in parliament, were directed against Popular Unity and Panagiotis Lafazanis, and not Tsipras and the new memorandum. I don't think this is fully understood internationally.

I will also say something about Antarsya. The split in Syriza was the end result of a long period of debate and struggle, and everybody knew about the internal left opposition and how it was combatting the capitulation of the leadership. There was a substantial period of discussions over perspectives on the Left regarding these developments. For months, then, it was clear to the leadership of Antarsya that they must give an answer to the question: If the left of Syriza is going out of the party what shall we do?

Antarsya split over this question. They had a national conference, but everybody already knew before hand what the result would be. About a third of Antarsya was in favor of joining with a united left, and the majority two-thirds, mainly NAR, SEK, and OKDE (Organization of Communists Internationalists) said, "No we must continue marching separately and enter the elections as Antarsya." It is clear that if we had had a unitary intervention in the elections the discussion now would be absolutely different, because with the combined forces of Popular Unity and Antarsya we would be inside parliament; we would have a parliamentary group that could play a role in organizing the resistance outside the party. That was definitely possible, and I think that everybody who acted against this perspective has a responsibility to come to terms with this mistake.

Could you say something about the danger of the Greek fascists, Golden Dawn, gaining traction as a result of the collapse in support for the traditional parties and somewhat rapid demise of Syriza's project?

Many comrades internationally think the crisis in the Greek Left is a huge opportunity for the Greek Nazi party, Golden Dawn. Generally speaking this is correct, but very generally speaking. What has really happened is that the presence of Popular Unity was an important obstacle for Golden Dawn to win people who were disappointed by Tsipras. Not to say that everybody who was disappointed voted for Popular Unity. A majority of people disappointed by Tsipras abstained. But because the Left was there and a clear opposition, a current toward the far right has not been created.

You could see, for example, Nikolaos Michaloliakos and other leaders of Golden Dawn speaking angrily against Popular Unity because they were losing an opportunity around the elections. The result was that Golden Dawn slightly increased their percentage in the elections, but did not increase their number of votes. This can be explained also from the fact that Golden Dawn is in crisis politically and organizationally because of the large antiracist and antifascist mobilizations that took place after the assassination of rapper Pavlos Fyssas. The inability of the Nazis to grow significantly in a period like this is due to all the comrades who participated in the marches that preceded the elections. For example, I must note, that the solidarity with refugees organized by Syriza was very successful in influencing popular opinion, and even in softening the stance of the ruling-class media that had been hostile to immigrants.

The political and organizational problems of Golden Dawn are problems of orientation—can they build a militant, hard current acting militarily in the streets at night and in the light of day, or should they be oriented on organizing a far-right electoral presence in parliament? Their biggest problem is organizational, and that is absolutely due to the antifascist mobilizations. They cannot mobilize people at the level they could two years ago. They have tried to call big public meetings, to organize attacks on refugees. They have failed at both. That is good news, but it does not mean we can be complacent. We must continue to push them back and finish them off at the first possible opportunity.

Going forward, what are the perspectives for the Left in Greece?

Today Tsipras is giving his programmatic speech in parliament. We don't anticipate any surprises. We know what he will say. He will present a hard memorandum, and the jokes he was making before the elections are finished. Everybody knows that there is no way to soften the coming cuts in salaries and pensions, the heavy taxation on the population, the huge austerity that is coming. So the jokes are finished. He will present his austerity policy. From our point of view this will open up a period of confrontation between the government of Syriza and ANEL on the one side, and the working-class movement and the Left that insists on an anti-austerity policy on the other.

How quickly we will arrive at the moment of central confrontation like we knew in Greece in the past, with big general strikes, occupations, big strikes, huge demonstrations, nobody knows the answer. We will have to face the difficulty that this is a new government, a government that is speaking in the name of the Left, a government that is using the images of Syriza, the flags, symbols that the people know were the symbols of the resistance to austerity, and now will be the symbols of imposing austerity. How fast we can get out of this difficulty, nobody knows.

Even now there are preparations inside the unions led by Popular Unity to organize the first general strike at the end of October. I think it's a world speed record. But I'm not sure that this will be the first big success, but this will open the new period. At the same time, we are trying to organize—in the neighborhoods, inside the schools, inside the hospitals—committees of resistance to austerity.

We are doing the same job we were always doing, and with the same methods.

Another new thing that is arising from this situation is that from the day the Tsipras government begins to impose the memorandum conditions, in my opinion, this will also signal a process of regroupment of the real bourgeois forces, and I mean of both the Right and of social democracy. We don't know how fast it will be, and we don't know if that includes parts of Syriza. A perspective of regroupment of the social-democratic-center left in Greece will depend to an extent on the Tsipras leadership and a part of Syriza. This is very clear for experienced social democratic cadres that are always around even if they are not in government or in parliament.

My final remark concerns the situation of the Left outside Syriza. The election results for Popular Unity did not give us enough votes to enter parliament. We won 2.86 percent but we needed 3 percent. With 7,000 votes more we would have been inside the parliament. But we did have 155,000 votes. In these circumstances, it was too few, but not nothing. This is a base for starting the mobilization. More important than the votes is the fact that Popular Unity is collecting a potential of several thousand militants and activists—organized militants and activists.

Having left Syriza, we are not lost in space. We have created new local and professional organizations. Of course, as a new organization this means that we face many political and organizational difficulties, from disputes over our political line to finding meeting and office spaces, and managing our finances. But we have experienced leaderships in many places, with good comrades who know how to fight and how to organize. I think this is the base. Our decision is to fight for this base—to fight, to make it better, to make it a center of the resistance, and at the same time to enlarge Popular Unity. We seek to win comrades—those who left Syriza, but have not joined Popular Unity due to old disagreements and differences—to a common action and common organizing.

To return to Antarsya: We say, okay, the failure to form a united electoral front has come and gone. Now we have a new situation. It would be pure sectarianism if we do not act together to form a united front against austerity. This united front should also include members of the Communist Party. (I mean members, not the leadership, of the KKE. You cannot have a dialogue with the existing leadership of the Communist Party.) That is our main orientation.

To enforce this orientation, DEA has taken the last two years to create the Red Network, first inside Syriza, and now outside of it. The Red Network is a network of militants and activists who agree on the same political orientation without necessarily having the same ideological background. We in DEA are Trotskyists, for example, whereas the Red Network is not. The Red Network is an anticapitalist, antifascist organization fighting for social and political rights, and it is antisexist and internationalist. This is describing a kind of radicalization and politicization. The Red Network is going very well and so our method will be traditional: reinforcing the Red Network, fighting together with Popular Unity, for Popular Unity, for the construction of an alternative to the betrayal of July 13.

We don't know yet what the result will be. And so, I can frankly say, to all our comrades internationally, the end of the story of Syriza has not been written yet. So don't jump to conclusions, and don't write the story too quickly. I think that the summary will be written in the period that is coming. It will be told in how the working class and how the broad left in Greece, and how the Left that went out of Syriza will deal with the effort of Tsipras and his leading group to impose a new wave of hard austerity. We will know the end of the story at the end of the story, not now. We are in a very bitter moment, but this story is not finished.

I must also insist that in my personal opinion the crisis inside Syriza has not finished. There are

comrades who have stayed inside Syriza with illusions hoping that they will find some trick to make it better. I don't believe that these people are pro-memorandum, dedicated followers of austerity. So I think a new wave of exits, of resignations, are in front of us, and we will be ready to accept all these comrades with open arms.

P.S.

* ISR Issue #99: Interviews:

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