

# Greece: Syriza needs clear answers

Tuesday 2 June 2015, by [NTAVANELLOS \(DAVANELLOS\) Antonis](#) (Date first published: 27 May 2015).

**Antonis Davanellos and Antonis Ntavanellos are two transcriptions of the authors greek name, the first one apparently used more in English and the second in French. We put them both here for those who would look at his articles available on ESSF in both languages.**

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## Presentation

The stark choice facing the Greek government—accept the demands of the European Union and other “institutions,” and continue to impose harsh austerity measures without any relief; or reject the extortion and face the possibility of a break with the eurozone—is being intensely debated throughout Greece, and particularly with the radical left party SYRIZA.

In February, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras accepted an agreement with the Eurogroup finance ministers that would extend the bailout of the Greek financial system in return for significant concessions on the promises SYRIZA made before and during the election campaign this January that brought it to office. But the EU has continued to starve the government of funds, demanding capitulation to another so-called Memorandum agreement of further austerity measures. The government is coming closer and closer to the point when it will have to choose between paying wages and pensions or defaulting on various debt obligations.

At a marathon meeting in late May, SYRIZA’s Central Committee—the party’s leading elected body—approved a resolution calling for continued negotiations and defense of the so-called “red lines” that Tsipras and the government has promised they won’t cross in any agreements. An amendment put forward by the Left Platform calling for the government to not pay the next debt obligations and pursue a different path was defeated, but by a narrow 75-to-95 vote.

Antonis Davanellos is a member of the Internationalist Workers Left (DEA), one of the organizations that cofounded SYRIZA in 2004. He is currently a member of SYRIZA’s Central Committee and Political Secretariat and a leading voice of the Left Platform. In this article for DEA’s *Workers’ Left* newspaper [\[1\]](#)—based on a speech to the late May Central Committee meeting—Davanellos argues for a way out of the vicious circle.

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## **“We must urgently seek a way out of the present vicious circle”**

IN RECENT days, a barrage of articles in the domestic and international press have called for purges and expulsions of the leaders of the left inside SYRIZA, as a condition for the government to complete an agreement with the lenders.

This demand—which, by the way, should have already received the appropriate response from SYRIZA’s leadership—is a warning about the nature of the agreement that the lenders are hoping they can impose. But we already have just such a warning from the progress of the negotiations themselves and the reports about them that have already been made public.

Since the February 20 agreement—or, to be more accurate, trap—the institutions have followed a policy of financial strangulation against the Greek government. At this point, having the upper, they appear to be able to choose between imposing a new Memorandum agreement on the government or triggering a temporary crisis in order to confront or even overturn the character of the government that came to office after the January 25 elections.

From the information available now, the best scenario for an agreement that would be accepted by the lenders would contain the following minimum concessions toward the Greek government: 1) Allowing the government to run relatively small primary surpluses in the coming years; and 2) No new cuts in wages and pensions.

Even if the current status quo doesn’t deteriorate, such an agreement would limit SYRIZA’s capabilities of managing the situation. But the current status quo is drastic hyper-austerity created by the first two Memorandums. If SYRIZA is required to manage these austerity policies, it will become subservient to them, and face insurmountable political difficulties even in the medium term.

Worse, however, the proposed agreement doesn’t even guarantee the current status quo. In a variety of hidden ways, the agreement would lead to a deterioration of conditions that will be felt by the masses in their daily experiences.

For example, the agreement may not cut salaries any further, but the anticipated revenue from the value-added tax is increased by 800 million euros, this will reduce the amount of money people have to spend, most of all in working-class and poor households. If the unfair ENFIA tax on property is maintained, it may not be a “new measure,” but it will result in further losses in working class and middle class incomes. The consolidation of pension funds may not cause further cut in pensions funds that have already been reduced, but it would block any of the gains achieved in health care.

And above all, the proposal doesn’t affect the ongoing privatizations of ports, airports, public land, etc.—which are a “red line” that the left must not concede for any reason.

THEREFORE, WE must say that agreement with the lenders under discussion is a Memorandum agreement.

Many comrades seek the continuation of negotiations. This can be done for a period of some days yet. But in my opinion, it is time to face reality: To state a clear “no” to this agreement and devote all our strength and resources to building an alternative.

If, however, we accept such an agreement, we should take into account the political developments that will inevitably follow. The weakening of SYRIZA’s relationship with its working class and popular base that represents—and much more so, if it is combined with the purges and expulsions that the media shamelessly support—will encourage further proposals for expanding the government

to include parties from the neoliberal camp, such as Potami.

This would be the first step towards a government of “national unity” that the “institutions” pushed for in answer to the vote of the working class on January 25. The statements of Dora Bakoyannis, the neoliberal guru of the center right, on the day after the SYRIZA Central Committee meeting, leaves no room for doubt about this plan.

The idea that the current government will be only a “left-wing interlude” between pro-austerity governments is based on two scenarios:

1) SYRIZA as Salvador Allende, the socialist president of Chile overthrown in a military coup in 1973: Under this scenario, the government of the left is overthrown immediately, by means of the lenders’ blackmail and a coup that is more or less softer than the Chilean example.

2) SYRIZA as Romano Prodi, the former prime minister of Italy who presided over a government in the mid-2000s in which radical left parties were an important component, but which capitulated to neoliberalism: Under this scenario, the government, having been shifted more and more to a social-liberal policy, accepts a third Memorandum agreement. This, too, leads to the overthrow of the government of the left, but with the crisis played out within the party of SYRIZA.

We must urgently seek a way out of this vicious circle. The path leading out is known to all of us: rejection of the Memorandums; default on debt and interest payments to the international and domestic loan sharks as a first step toward renouncing most of the debt; heavy taxation on capital and the accumulated wealth of the rich; nationalization of the banks; controls to prevent the further flight of capital; mobilization of all resources to meet the needs of workers and popular masses, by saving public hospitals, schools, etc.

This alternative path must be supported by any means—governmental, diplomatic, financial—necessary, including a conflict and break with the Eurozone.

A shift in direction toward an exit from negotiations and a potential break with the Eurozone will likely require a new popular mandate, meaning new elections. We would call for such a vote not to escape from the difficulties of exercising governmental authority, but to ask of the people of Greece for the power and a clear mandate to tackle those difficulties with a radical-left political agenda.

**Antonis Davanellos**

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**P.S.**

\* <http://socialistworker.org/2015/06/01/syriza-needs-clear-answers>

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## Footnotes

[1] <http://rproject.gr/article/o-syriza-mprosta-sti-symfonia-me-toys-daneistes-anagki-katharis-apan-tisis>