

Greek Communist Party holds final election rally

By Christoph Dreier and Katerina Selin
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The final election rally of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), held last Friday, resembled those of recent years. The various occupational groups within the party marched in a star formation with numerous party banners to a central rally in Pedion Areos Square, where General Secretary Aleka Papariga gave an hour-long speech.

The political situation has changed fundamentally, however, in the past three years. The social counterrevolution launched in Greece under the auspices of the European Union (EU) has driven millions of workers into misery and strained social relations to the breaking point. Greek society is entering a pre-revolutionary situation.

Under these conditions, the arch-Stalinist KKE is playing a key role for the ruling elite by diverting and suppressing social anger. This was evident at the rally.

Thousands of people come to the event, for the most part members of the party or its affiliated trade union, the All Workers Militant Front (PAME). Many younger participants had family ties to the party.

When asked why they supported the KKE, most participants said they did not believe the propaganda of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), which argued it was possible to defend workers' rights within the EU.

"The KKE is opposed to the EU, which is against the peoples of Europe and all those parties seeking a humane solution to the crisis", said 43-year-old Maria, who lost her job and received unemployment payments for only two months.

"The EU created this crisis," Stavros, a clerical worker, told the *World Socialist Web Site*. "There is no solution within the EU".

Theo, a 28-year-old electrician, said he would like to see Greece remain in the EU because withdrawal

would have dire consequences. "But the consequences of staying in are even worse." In recent months he has worked 10 to 16 hours a day because the company for which he works has eliminated jobs. At the same time, his wages have been cut by 30 percent. Now he has been told he will also be sacked at the end of the month.

In her speech, Papariga appealed to these sentiments, which are increasingly shared by workers. "All parties from SYRIZA to New Democracy are committed to the EU," she said. "The main aim of their policy is therefore to fulfill EU obligations."

Papariga continued: "A pro-people development within the EU will not work... The ruling class has seen that New Democracy (ND) and PASOK no longer fulfill their purpose. A new political constellation with two new poles is being created from the old material. A center-right around ND and a center-left around SYRIZA."

Papariga went on to criticize the double-talk of SYRIZA, which "speaks with one tongue in Greece and another when abroad". Referring to the leader and candidate of SYRIZA, she added, "Tsipras no longer rejects the Memorandum. All parties recognize the debts."

At the same time, the KKE leader rejected German plans to exclude Greece from the euro zone. "The KKE will have nothing to do with such a policy," she said. Instead, she declared, the party favored "people power" in Greece, which would refuse to recognize the national debt and would detach itself from the EU and invest the country's wealth in its people.

"With the KKE the people are the protagonist—break the grip of the EU and NATO," read a large banner behind Papariga as she spoke.

In reality, such radical-sounding slogans are

employed to channel the anger of workers back behind the trade union bureaucracy. Moreover, the KKE, more so than other Stalinist parties, continues to openly idolize Stalin. In a recent election broadcast, Pappariga even referred to the North Korean dictatorship as a socialist country.

While the KKE declares opposition to the EU and NATO, it has no intention of mobilizing workers against them. Rather, it seeks to subordinate workers to sections of the Greek bourgeoisie that favor a national road for Greece. The KKE's criticism of the EU is thoroughly nationalistic.

"We are now dependent on capitalist enterprises in countries of Northern Europe," Pappariga said in her speech. "In order to end this dependence, Greece must develop its own agriculture, industry and food production. There are sufficient resources available."

Pappariga echoed Stalin's reactionary policy of "socialism in one country," declaring, "We can build socialism alone in Greece. The KKE has the program and Greece the necessary resources."

Stalin's nationalist policy reflected the interests of the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy within the Soviet Union that sought to defend its own privileges by suppressing revolutions in countries around the world.

In Greece, the KKE rejects socialist internationalism and promotes nationalism in order to maintain and strengthen its own links to the bourgeois state and the national trade union bureaucracy.

The nationalist program put forward by Pappariga serves to isolate the struggles of Greek workers from their European counterparts. At the same time, the KKE asserts that there exists no revolutionary situation in Greece in order to justify the subordination of workers to the trade union bureaucracy.

"Before we can think of revolution, we must first unite the trade unions", was the comment of one participant at the rally. In practice, this means the suppression of any independent movement of the working class against the austerity policies of the EU. It was precisely the trade unions that played the main role in ensuring that the cuts were implemented.

PAME is itself part of Greece's largest trade union federation, the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), and has participated in the symbolic protests called by the parent body. PAME refuses, however, to call upon workers to undertake serious

independent action.

In October of last year, when hundreds of thousands protested outside the parliament building against social attacks, the KKE actually lined up in three rows in front of the parliament to protect it from angry workers.

The KKE and PAME have also played a key role in isolating the ongoing strike by steel workers at the Halivourgia Aspropyrgos plant, which workers have occupied for several months.

Much of the funding for PAME and the KKE is tied to their collaboration with the GSEE. The KKE election rally took place in front of the headquarters of the trade union federation, which has frequently offered the eastern facade of its headquarters as a backdrop for the KKE and its banners.

The actual role of the KKE makes a mockery of its rhetorical calls for "people's power" and the "intervention of the working class". These appeals are aimed at duping workers and covering up for the KKE's right-wing practice.

Against a background of highly unstable political conditions, the KKE—with its close links to the trade union bureaucracy, its long experience in suppressing workers, and its record of serving as a loyal opposition to bourgeois governments—is being held in reserve to head off a new wave of working class opposition. This is why the party has categorically ruled out participation, for the time being, in a new government.

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