

Defend the Greek working class!

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The fifth austerity package dictated by the EU and presented to the Greek government on Wednesday is to be approved next week by parliament. Like its predecessors, it contains a massive assault on the working class—including an increase in the retirement age from 65 to 67; a €4.6 billion cut in pensions; a €1.17 billion cut in salaries; and a €455 million cut in health care spending. Those who will benefit are the banks and speculators, while the vast majority of the population will be plunged further into misery.

According to official government estimates, Greece's debt will rise next year to the unprecedented level of nearly 190 percent of gross domestic product. Its economy is forecast to shrink by seven percent this year and by over five percent next year. Unemployment has reached 25.1 percent, a new record, and will continue to rise as lay-offs hit the public sector.

The attacks on Greece are the most brutal of a wave of austerity measures being imposed across Europe. The critical political question today is the independent revolutionary mobilization of the working class against the European Union (EU), its austerity policies, and the governments carrying them out.

A critical political precondition for such an offensive is solidarity with the embattled Greek working class, and uncompromising hostility to racist campaigns to blame them for the ongoing debt crisis and social catastrophe in Greece.

The financial elite can only carry out its brutal attacks on the European working class because workers lack a perspective to oppose EU diktats. The main responsibility for this situation lies with various reactionary pseudo-left groups, such as the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and the Left Party in Germany. They insist that the EU can be reformed, subordinating workers to the reactionary EU institutions.

This absence of an independent political party of the working class, under conditions of growing economic

desperation, poses the gravest dangers. If the petty-bourgeois “left” blocks the working class from advancing a revolutionary solution to the crisis of capitalism, fascistic tendencies can and will appeal to middle class and impoverished layers of the Greek population.

The violent fascist organization *Chrysi Avgi* (Golden Dawn) has risen to 14 percent in the polls. Public attacks on political opponents, artists, homosexuals, or immigrants by government officials or fascist gangs now occur daily in Greece. The aim is above all to intimidate and terrorize the working class.

The press now widely compares the devastation inflicted on Greece to that visited on Germany at the end of the Weimar Republic, before the Nazis came to power.

The German ruling class also responded to the crisis at that time by continually implementing more austerity measures, seeking to squeeze the working class dry. With the support of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Chancellor Brüning introduced massive cuts in wages, social benefits and pensions in 1930-1932, through no less than 62 emergency decrees.

The German ruling class met resistance by workers with increasingly authoritarian measures. Following the semi-dictatorial governments of Papen and Schleicher, Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor on January 30 with the support of all the main bourgeois parties, the military and representatives of big business. The latter were determined to utilize the Nazis to destroy the organizations of the working class.

Today in Greece, the connection between brutal social attacks and the rise of anti-democratic and fascistic tendencies is unmistakable. The work of government is now conducted in Brussels, and not by the Greek cabinet or parliament. Just last year the EU removed an elected government and replaced it by a government of unelected technocrats. Since then, there has been a steady increase in attacks on striking

workers, immigrants, and protesters.

The police cooperates directly with Golden Dawn, which entered the Greek parliament for the first time in June.

These tendencies not only arise from the social devastation caused by EU austerity measures; they are also tacitly tolerated by the EU. When anti-fascist demonstrators were tortured by the Greek police, EU representatives were silent.

As social attacks intensify, authoritarian tendencies are spreading across the continent. In Spain and Portugal, workers demonstrating against cuts have been regularly beaten and abused by police. Now the Spanish government is preparing to introduce a law penalizing those who document police brutality.

Across Europe, Roma and other minorities are being chased through the streets and deported by security forces. In Germany, far-right and fascist structures are being built up and financed by the secret services.

The working class can only defend itself by establishing its fighting unity against austerity measures and the rising fascistic and authoritarian tendencies in Europe. This will take place through a determined struggle against the paralyzing influence of the petty-bourgeois groups such as SYRIZA. Fearing working class revolution far more than the ultra-right, they will function only as obstacles in the struggle against fascism and authoritarian tendencies in Europe.

Workers need a new party that unites across all borders in a struggle against the EU and for the United Socialist States of Europe. This means building sections of the world socialist party, the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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