

Pseudo-left groups in Greece line up behind SYRIZA

By Robert Stevens
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The Greek sections of the International Socialist Tendency (IST) and the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) are backing SYRIZA as it prepares to take state power on the basis of a pro-capitalist program.

SYRIZA, the Coalition of the Radical Left, is leading polls for the upcoming January 25 general election and is expected to win. As a consequence, its leader, Alexis Tsipras, may become Greece's next prime minister.

The IST's group in Greece is the Socialist Workers Party (SEK). It is part of the ANTARSYA [Anticapitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow] coalition that also includes the Organisation of Communist Internationalists of Greece-Spartakos (the section of the Pabloite United Secretariat) and various Stalinist, Maoist and ecological tendencies claiming to offer a left alternative to SYRIZA. The IST originates from the British state capitalist tendency, formed by Tony Cliff in the 1950s and today called the Socialist Workers Party.

The CWI's group in Greece, Xekinima (Start-Socialist Internationalist Organisation) is part of Initiative 1000, set up in November 2012 as a collection groups including forces working within both SYRIZA and ANTARSYA—plus elements expelled from the Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Xekinima's larger British affiliate is the Socialist Party, led by Peter Taaffe.

Although SEK and Xekinima are not formally part of SYRIZA, Alex Tsipras's party counts on their support. Both are specialists in palming off a prospective SYRIZA-led government as a force that, in the words of the British SWP, is ready to take on "Europe's bosses and bankers".

Since 2012 SYRIZA has been busy jettisoning much of its previous left rhetoric. In 2013, Tsipras informed the US ruling elite, "I hope I've convinced you that I'm not as dangerous as some people think I am". After several years of calibrating its programme with the guidance of representatives of global capital, SYRIZA presented its election programme last September. As a result of its pledge to renegotiate, not write off, Greece's debt, it was hailed for its "sensible policies" by the *Financial Times*.

Under these conditions, the backing of the CWI and the IST for SYRIZA exposes them as props of the ruling elite.

In an interview with the British Socialist Party on January 6, Xekinima leader Andros Payiatsos said that a SYRIZA victory was the most likely election outcome. Asked, "How do you think SYRIZA will act in government?" Payiatsos replied, "The SYRIZA leadership has been moving clearly to the right since the elections of 2012," before adding, "There is great suspicion and lack of enthusiasm in the masses because they see that the leadership of SYRIZA is doing everything possible to come to an understanding with the forces of the market—the Troika, the EU, and the national establishment."

Payiatsos then acknowledges, "It's not ruled out that SYRIZA could move further to the right to stay within the Eurozone once in power." He then claimed, however, "The problems in society are so major" that the masses "will have to fight, and they will fight, pushing a SYRIZA government to the left. So, despite the fact that the SYRIZA leadership is moving to the right and looking for a compromise with the forces of the markets internationally, it is possible that they will be pushed to the left under the pressure of the mass movement."

The working class, therefore, must entirely subordinate itself to pressuring SYRIZA and, in its "struggles must try to link with the left rank and file of SYRIZA to push the party to the left."

In its January 10 call for a SYRIZA vote, Xekinima stated, "Many are asking: Will SYRIZA keep its promises? To this the average worker answers: even if it satisfies 10% of what it says, it is significant. Workers are therefore prepared to give time to support everything positive that for them a left government will be about."

If all that "the average worker" expects of SYRIZA is that it implements ten percent of its pro-capitalist programme, then Xekinima has awarded itself carte blanche to back it to the hilt.

Xekinima was a component part of SYRIZA until 2011. At that time, said Payiatsos, Xekinima "distanced" itself

from SYRIZA “because the reformism of SYRIZA’s leadership isolated us from the most radical layers of society and workers in the forefront of the struggles could see the limitations of SYRIZA.”

From that time, both Xekinima and ANTARSYA have played the role of political apologists for SYRIZA—remaining formally outside the coalition while maintaining intimate relations with it.

Payiatsos explained the nature of Xekinima’s operation in another interview: “Though a certain section of our membership is also in SYRIZA, Xekinima stands outside, openly raising the call for various oppositional currents within the left parties to come together to form a common ‘arc’ or ‘center’ to coordinate their efforts.”

Payiatsos boasts, “We still collaborate with SYRIZA on many levels, such as electoral politics,” adding, “Above all we have very close relations with the left opposition within SYRIZA and through, for example, the Initiative of the 1000, the opposition inside ANTARSYA and the expelled activists of the KKE.”

Despite SYRIZA being so right-wing that they were forced to leave it to maintain any credibility with workers, Xekinima wants more than anything to be a player within a government led by this party, one that will continue attacking the working class. Payiatsos said, “As part of the Initiative of 1,000 we’re calling for a vote for SYRIZA, we’re in negotiations with SYRIZA to have a number of candidates [in the upcoming election] in some of the main constituencies in Athens, Salonika and Volos.”

ANTARSYA plays the same role, with SEK leader Panos Garganas noting in a recent article, “The signs are that Syriza’s approach will be appeasement.”

He says in response, “The anti-capitalist left has to organise pressure from the left and below.”

The last issue of the UK SWP’s *Socialist Worker* included an interview with SYRIZA MP Dimitris Tsoukalas.

Tsoukalas is a former deputy of the social democratic PASOK, the party that began the imposition of austerity in 2009 and was previously president of the bank workers union. Tsoukalas is just one of many leading figures who decamped from PASOK to SYRIZA in order to save their career, following the collapse of support for PASOK due to its role in imposing brutal cuts.

The leading layers in SYRIZA support the European Union and Greek capitalism because they have accrued fortunes even as the working class has suffered. In a December 2013 article, “Rich politicians, impoverished people” the *Times of Change* web site reported on the declared wealth of Greece’s politicians as it stood in 2011, the second year of austerity. It noted that SYRIZA MPs, “despite their leftist ideology and rhetoric have amassed

significant assets in very difficult times for the average Greek.”

Tsoukalas, reported TOC, “shows savings of over a million euros claiming it was a one off pension payment from his work at ABN AMRO bank. Eucleides Tsakalotos, and Giorgos Stathakis, also of SYRIZA, show investments in firms like JP Morgan and Black Rock, with portfolios of 500,000 and 426,000 euros respectively. Their comrade in the party, Nadia Valavani declares 360,000 pounds and 450,000 euros in deposits. Former SYRIZA head Alekos Alavanos shows over 350,000 euros in savings, a sizable stock portfolio, and 11 properties.”

These are the avaricious social layers that the CWI, IST, et al describe as a potential “workers’ government” and call on workers to vote for.

The pseudo-left in the CWI and IST draw their support overwhelmingly from sections of middle class who had previously been able to secure privileged positions through their administration of the public sector, including academia and the welfare state. Many emulated Tsoukalas in securing privileged positions in the upper echelons of the trade union bureaucracy.

The value of these forces to SYRIZA is well understood. As the election campaign began, Tsipras made a call to the various pseudo-left formations in Greece to work with SYRIZA ahead of the upcoming January 25 election and beyond.

“We are appealing first and foremost to the forces of the Left from the left socialists to the extra-parliamentary left,” Tsipras said. “We are appealing to the KKE and ANTARSYA and call on them to realise that the battle that we have to wage supersedes our existing differences within the left.”

This call has been heard loud and clear.

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