

# Defend the Greek workers! Oppose the diktat of Schäuble and Merkel!

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The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG—Socialist Equality Party) denounces the agreement forced on Greece by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble at Sunday's euro group summit. We call upon workers in Germany and throughout Europe to declare their solidarity with the workers in Greece and organize mass resistance to the policies of the German government.

The new austerity demands, to which the government of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras capitulated on Monday morning, go far beyond the measures the Greek population rejected, by a large majority, in the referendum held just one week before. For millions of Greeks, the implementation of these measures means poverty, unemployment, disease and even death. Greece will be transformed into a de facto protectorate of Germany and the most powerful European financial interests.

The troika (European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) is returning to Athens and will dictate government policy. The role of parliament is to be reduced to rubber-stamping austerity measures and signing off on automatic budget cuts. State property valued at €50 billion will be transferred to a fund, to be sold off to the highest bidder, modeled on the Treuhandanstalt, set up in 1990 to liquidate state property in East Germany.

The agreement amounts to a carte blanche for the ruthless exploitation and plundering of the Greek working class.

Even establishment commentators could not overlook the agreement's undemocratic character. In the *Financial Times*, Wolfgang Münchau accused Greece's creditors of reverting to "the nationalist European power struggles of the 19th and early 20th century" and transforming the euro zone into a system "run in the interests of Germany" and "held together by the threat of absolute destitution for those who challenge the prevailing order."

Paul Krugman in the *New York Times* accused the euro group of "pure vindictiveness, complete destruction of national sovereignty, and no hope of relief."

The brutal actions of Schäuble and Merkel recall the darkest chapter in German history. Less than seventy-five years have passed since Hitler's Wehrmacht occupied Greece, established a brutal regime of terror, and ruthlessly plundered the country. The imposition of high occupation costs, the export of virtually

all of Greece's industrial goods, and the theft of machinery and vehicles led to a famine that took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

The Wehrmacht responded to resistance from partisan fighters by massacring the inhabitants of numerous villages, including Distomo, Lingiades and Kommeno. At least 30,000 civilians fell victim to these reprisals. Eight thousand Jews were deported and murdered, and the Jewish community in Thessaloniki, one of the world's oldest, was completely wiped out. None of the victims were ever compensated, and virtually none of the perpetrators were punished.

Schäuble and Merkel are now walking in the footsteps of their predecessors. The German ruling class is spewing forth all the undigested filth of the past. Their arrogance suggests that they see themselves, once again, as Europe's master race.

The politicians are supported by a spineless press, for which no cliché or prejudice is too cheap to be hurled at the Greek people. The media spread propaganda and do everything in their power to confuse and mislead the public.

The government also relies on historians such as Jörg Baberowski of Humboldt University, who falsifies history to trivialise German crimes in World War II. It is backed by economists, who declare the impoverishment of the Greek working class a historical necessity, and political scientists, such as Herfried Münkler, who formulates the political arguments for German hegemony in Europe.

All of the parties represented in the German parliament support the government. The Social Democratic (SPD) chairman Sigmar Gabriel has led the way, seeking to outdo Schäuble and Merkel from the right.

They are all convinced that history has been forgotten. But they are deceiving themselves. The working class of Greece, Germany and Europe cannot and will not allow them to repeat Germany's historic crimes.

The German government is pursuing two goals in its aggressive actions in Greece. It intends to set an example to intimidate all resistance to its austerity course in Europe and Germany. And it seeks to strengthen its hegemonic domination of Europe.

By the time of the 2008 financial crisis, the government had decided that Germany could no longer maintain its dominance through compromises and financial assistance. Germany had to

become, in the words of Münkler, Europe's "disciplinarian," instead of its "paymaster." Early last year, leading government officials demanded that Germany play a role in Europe and the world that corresponded to its actual influence.

This new great power politics was first tested out in Ukraine, where the German government backed the pro-Western coup that has driven the country to civil war and brought NATO to the brink of a military confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia. These same policies are being continued in what amounts to a civilian coup in Athens.

The face of the European Union has been transformed in the process. It is becoming ever more obvious that the EU is not a mechanism for the peaceful coexistence of Europe's peoples, but rather an instrument for the predominance of the most powerful imperialist powers and the ruthless exploitation of the working class. Masses of people now view the EU with a mixture of disgust and hatred.

The more openly Germany uses the EU to attain the position of a world power, the more intense the national conflicts within Europe become—above all between Germany and France. Prior to Sunday's summit there were sharp exchanges between Berlin and Paris, which, due to domestic political considerations, was favoring a more conciliatory course towards Greece. The French government eventually submitted to Germany's dictates because it fears the threat from its own working class much more than it fears German hegemony. These tensions, however, will flare up again, as will the developing conflict between the US and Germany over who will control Europe.

It is the task of the working class in Germany and throughout Europe to oppose these dangerous actions, which threaten to plunge the working class into desperate poverty, and the continent, once again, into war and dictatorship. To this end, it is vital to draw the lessons of the events in Greece and the role played by Syriza.

It is hard to find a parallel in history to the cowardly and shameful betrayal carried out in the past few days by Tsipras and his government. Elected in January on the basis of a promise to end austerity, Tsipras' party made one concession after another to Berlin and Brussels.

Finally, it organized a referendum, hoping that a majority would favour the EU-backed austerity measures. Confronted, instead, with an overwhelming majority against austerity, it capitulated completely to the German diktat within a week. Even a right-wing bourgeois government would not have gone so far.

This surrender confirms the PSG's assessment that Syriza is not a left, and certainly not a socialist, party, but rather a pseudo-left organization representing wealthy, selfish middle class layers primarily concerned with their own well-being. They have nothing but contempt for the working class, which they fear. Their capitulation is grist for the mill of far-right extremists such as Golden Dawn, which, from a reactionary,

nationalist standpoint, poses as a more determined opponent of the dictates of Brussels and Berlin than does the supposedly "left" Syriza.

What is true for Syriza also applies, as well, to its international co-thinkers, including the Left Party in Germany and Podemos in Spain.

The Left Party bears immense responsibility for the fate of Greece. In February, it voted for the "aid program" for Greece, including the austerity measures attached to it. Occasionally it criticizes the policies of the German government, in order to maintain a shred of credibility, but it has done absolutely nothing to support the Greek workers.

It has refused to organize a single demonstration in their defense. If the Left Party assumes power in Berlin, it will pursue the same course as Syriza. This has already been proven by its record in power at the state level.

The Left Party works closely with the trade unions, which have sought to aid the German government by shutting down and selling out strikes by train drivers, postal and daycare workers, hospital employees and other professionals.

The working class of Germany must rise to the defense of its class brothers and sisters in Greece. The PSG calls upon all workers involved in social struggles, all young people and the entire working population: Support the Greek workers! Organize solidarity strikes against the dictates of Schäuble and Merkel! Break with the Left Party and the SPD and organize independently!

The fundamental question is the necessity of building a revolutionary leadership—in Greece, Germany and throughout the European continent. Join the PSG, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, and build sections of the ICFI all over Europe that will fight for the unity of the European working class and the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe!

Partei für Soziale Gleichheit

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