

# Media Take on Greek Elections: Mad Leftists Win in Protest

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Alexis Tsipras, the leader of the leftwing Syriza Party in Greece, is now the nation's Prime Minister. (Photo: GreekCurrent.com)

When it comes to elections, there's the "who" of politics and then there's the "what" of it. What do parties and politicians actually *do* to win support? While they're not brilliant at the first, the money media in the US tend to be truly terrible at covering the latter. The historic election in Greece is a case in point.

Read the US press and you'd gather the following: Greece's new Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras, is its youngest ever (at forty); he's "far left," "leftist," a "leftist political maverick," a "tough talker" and "charismatic." Syriza, the party he leads, is usually called "radical," "far left," "extremist" or some mix of all the above.

What's it to you? As public radio's market report put it on the eve of the vote, "The potentially massive repercussions of this weekend's election in a small corner of Europe is one more risk for the world to worry about."

So there you have it. Mad leftists win. Watch out.

If you read a little deeper, you might get a bit of a fuller picture. After five years of recession and cuts, 1.3 million Greeks – some 26% of the workforce — are without a job, wages are down by 38%, pensions by 45 %. Almost a third of Greeks are living below the poverty line and about that many have no health insurance.

Running on a pledge to roll back spending cuts and renegotiate Greece's loans, Tsipras's victory was generally described as a protest vote, or a vote against austerity. Which it certainly was, but there's a bit more to it, and it's interesting stuff.

On The LF Show we had a chance to talk with a member of Syriza's Central Committee, Yiannis Bournous last year. It's "not charismatic speeches from balconies" that win support. He said. It's concrete help, and Syriza's offered a good deal of that in the last few years.

As we've reported in the past [on the show](#), a solidarity movement has grown up in Greece in the crisis. It runs some 400 health clinics, a network of community kitchens and what they call Food Solidarity Centers and cooperative groceries. When the first Syriza members were elected to parliament in 2012 they voted to give 20% of their monthly salary to that movement and as of this August, Bournous said Syriza volunteers were participating in 150

“networks of local solidarity” offering everything from free prescription drugs to free legal advice.

Left or right, effective leadership is important, but it’s possible, just possible, that Greek voters were swayed less by one guy’s charisma than they were by hundreds of volunteers’ daily presence in the neighborhoods.

If we looked at politics that way, how would US parties rate? Maybe there’s a reason US media prefer to stick to the surface.

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