

Post-Elections in Greece and The Left

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The steps to be taken by Syriza (Radical Left Coalition), which is expected to be the leading party in the elections to be held in Greece on Sunday, in case it takes place in the government to be established following the elections, has become more or less clear. Representatives of the party have expressed in many platforms that they shall show effort to organize a “European debt conference”, that such a conference would not only restructure debts but would also make it possible to achieve high rates of growth across Europe, and that it would not be necessary to impose austerity policies.

Previously in İleri Haber Erkin Özalp had written about how to approach Syriza and Doruk Cengiz had written a comprehensive article about its economy program. Thus I do not wish to reconsider these issues, but to make some evaluations on possible outcomes of the steps announced by Syriza.

First, no one expects German economic elites to immediately say “ok” to the compromise appeal of Syriza and sit at the negotiation table. Even if it is in a position to make concessions in issues such as debts and budget deficits, it is predicted that the German state shall extend the process in order to gain a stronger hand at the table and weaken the will for struggle of the working class of Greece.

On the other hand, as it is known, Syriza put forth the argument against the German state that “just as debts of Germany were restructured with a debt conference in 1953, now it is Greece’s turn”. However this comparison is not much analogous to the situation today. In the 1953 conference an imperialist state once again raised onto its feet, during a period named as “the golden age of capitalism”, when record high levels of growth were achieved and under conditions of intense competition with real socialism. It is not difficult to observe that the conditions today are exactly the reverse in each aspect.

Another important point is that the fascist party of Greece, the Golden Dawn shall play a significant role in the negotiations to be held between Syriza and the EU; because all the parties are preparing to put forth fascism as a threat risk. As it is known German and Greek bourgeoisie did everything necessary to strengthen this movement as a threat against the working class and allowed it to achieve gains within the state. On the other hand, the claim that “extreme right shall come if we fail” can be observed in the statements by Syriza, for example in the article by the party leader Alexis Tspiras published in the Financial Times yesterday. Thus both sides are making effort to spread the claim that fascism is the only alternative to a compromise with the bourgeoisie of Germany and Greece.

This is an important point, because it is evident that in case an agreement is reached on a European scale or at a more limited scope, as proposed by Syriza, this shall have a very

significant effect on the working class and the left. First, the appeal by Syriza to extend the scale beyond Greece, to a European level is quite remarkable. Syriza is trying to strengthen its hand in the negotiations by extending the negotiations from a small scale Greece, to the whole Southern European zone, which is grappling with crises. Again, it is evident that in case a European conference is held and in case a compromise is reached there, this shall have significant consequences throughout the world.

As a result, the working class imposed with poverty, is once again confronted with a dilemma of compromise with capital or the threat of fascism. What I mean in my criticism of compromise here, of course does not mean a call to reject ever concession made by the EU economic elites. When bosses are forced to take a step back as a result of a workers strike and the demands are achieved, it is possible to sit on the negotiation table and reach an agreement. Socialist revolutionary perspective does not mean for example to claim that workers strikes should never end and continue until the revolution. At this level of concreteness, "compromise" is inevitable until the revolutionary situation.

The compromise that I criticize here is related to the historical and political interests of the working class of. In the example of Greece, the offer made to the working class is to quit struggling against impositions of privatization, the European Union and the Euro zone, in exchange for an improvement in minimum wage and a decrease in unemployment. Syriza has already announced that it shall sit at the negotiation table with these demands and it is highly probable that the outcome could be even worse. Another aspect is the elimination of a line of struggle standing against the capitalist system and demanding socialism.

Recent history has many times indicated that limited gains would short lived in case the struggle for socialization and independence are given up and the aim for socialism as set aside. Therefore the compromise proposed by Syriza is not acceptable for the working class.

However it is observed that a majority of the working class of Greece is supporting the call for compromise by Syriza. As I mentioned above, it is observed that such a compromise, especially in case achieved on a European scale, will result in a wave of class compromise with significant effects on the left throughout the world. This wave could result in the perception that the actuality of socialism has been eliminated, a withdrawal of the demand for socialization against privatization and an end, to a great extent, of the questioning of the capitalist system.

Communists are of course, the most significant force against this possible wave. However the threat of "fascism" is put forth in each step that communists take on this issue and the approach "no to fascism and communism", which is in the official discourse of the German state, is used as a threat against communists in Greece. Communists who reject compromise are accused of supporting the strengthening of fascism.

There is an approach that in the face of this difficult situation, communist parties should be content with a principal/ideological attitude and wait for the wave the pass by. However this approach underestimates the strength of the incoming wave that I mentioned above. The shelter of a principal/ideological level shall not be sufficient against this wave.

We have lived through a similar story in the past. Socialist ideology suffered a serious damage and failed to protect itself against the liberal assault, as a result of the political defeat of the 80s and the 90s. Thus today, despite all its difficulties, it is necessary to raise a political line of struggle against the imposed dilemmas; and hiding in the secure shelters of

ideology fails to offer any cure.

At this point I would like to make some evaluations about the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and end my column. The path towards socialism is of course not linear and full of setbacks and leaps forward. Therefore it is not absolutely necessary to interpret the decrease in the votes of KKE in the last elections as an indication of a failure. This situation could also be a result of a process that could be deemed as inevitable in certain aspects. We are not in a position to make definite judgments about which of these two are valid.

As a conclusion, independent from the results of the elections to be held this weekend, Greek communists could regain the gains they lost against Syriza in the forthcoming process and become the most significant force to stand against the wave I mentioned above. The most important requirement for this is not to give up the will and determination to do politics. I wish success to KKE in the elections.

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