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Greece

Common action and anti-capitalist recomposition

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If something has changed in recent years inside the Greek left, this is due above all to the international movement against globalization. A crucial reference point for the movement in Greece was the mobilization in Genoa, which had very strong repercussions throughout the country - all the more so in that it followed the general strike of spring 2001 in defence of pensions. The main effect of these actions was the foundation and activity of the Greek Social Forum (GSF).

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/35835.jpg>]

The GSF was in the forefront of the movement against the imperialist war in Iraq, which was particularly large in Greece. It also played a decisive role in the mobilizations organized during the six months of the Greek presidency of the European Union. The GSF constitutes the most representative attempt at unity in recent years inside the Greek social movement: however, the traditions of the Greek left are far from being overcome. The Greek Communist Party (KKE) and most of the forces of the far left have refused to participate in the GSF and have chosen various other forms of intervention in the anti-globalization movement. But overall it certainly seems that the experience of these mobilizations, above all through that of the GSF, has created a dynamic that is greater by far than the credibility of the left parties and organizations. It's also true in Greece as elsewhere that there is considerable mistrust of the traditional left organizations and that workers and youth are seeking new forms of collective action.

Nevertheless, if one is to believe the predictions, they will not vote left in order to express their condemnation of the social liberal policy of the PASOK government. It seems rather that the votes lost by PASOK will go to the right. Thus, after a decade of attacks on the working class by social democracy, which have dissipated the illusion held by the social layers which supported PASOK, the left is not only incapable of capitalising on a part of the social despair, it is even being put under pressure by social democracy! And this in a period of relative progression of mobilizations.

Forces on the Greek left

Let's attempt a brief summary of the forces on the Greek left.

The KKE is undoubtedly the biggest mass pole. The party recruits, its members are active and it has refounded a youth organization following its serious crisis in this area in the 1990s. It is implanted in sectors of the working class. Its principal asset is that it presents itself as a party opposed to compromise and the dominant political system. It has clear and firm positions on imperialism, the European Union and NATO. In its discourse, it refers to the class struggle. Our criticism of the KKE is that it is sectarian, that it divides the mass movement with nationalist positions. Its monolithic leadership smothers any internal dispute. But to best understand what the KKE represents in Greek society, it should be understood that it is generally seen as a party of the past, sidelined for ever, a representative of the era of "socialism in one country" and the bureaucratic regimes of eastern Europe. Moreover, the KKE appears as an autarkic body. Nothing shows this more than the recent statement by its leadership claiming that the KKE is well protected from the influence on the left of the candidacy of Giorgos Papandreou because its forces are "entrenched"!

Only a little while ago, Synaspismos had the profile of a moderate left, which favoured the EU and centre-left governmental coalitions. It had adopted the same phraseology as the social democratic leadership, for whom the notion of "modernization" is a key element. Presenting itself as an open and democratic party, it can appear as an alternative to those who reject the KKE. At the same time, however, although there was within it an anti-neoliberal wing originating to a large degree from the KKE, it offered no class-based theory and did not succeed in recruiting a

mass activist base. Above all, it was seen as a force complementary to social democracy. However, this party has become conscious of the significance of the anti-globalization movement and quickly became active in its initiatives and its construction, which substantially strengthened the anti-neoliberal wing and led to a break with the known cadres of its right wing. Certainly, this evolution was positive, but that does not mean that Synaspismos has become an anti-capitalist party:

- While an anti-capitalist dynamic is widespread at a rank and file level, no distinguishable current organizes this in terms of theses, platform or orientation;
- Unlike the KKE, it is not a party with a militant base intervening in workers' struggles;
- The participation of Synaspismos in the GSF did not prevent it collaborating with PASOK in several areas during the last regional elections;
- Synaspismos participates fully in the Party of the European Left (with the PCF and other CPs);
- The fundamental concern of the apparatus is the electoral survival of the party.

Its electoral mobility can be explained by the fact that its electoral alliances are occasional, founded on practical sense. Its electoral appeal is the result of a compromise established to win electoral support from the forces of the far left which have cooperated with it in the foundation of the GSF, with the objective of reaching the threshold of 3% necessary to gain representation in Parliament.

Dispersal of the far left

The far left represents a real and combative force in Greece, but it is organizationally very fragmented and not credible electorally. At the elections on March 7, 2004 two far left lists were presented.

The first was that of the Radical Left Front, in which the main force was the NAR (New Left Current, originating from a split in the Communist Youth in the early 1990s). This list has no electoral dynamic and this results from the sectarian conception of the organizations that constitute it. The list did not even succeed in grouping the organized far left forces which work with the NAR in the anti-globalization movement inside Fighting Initiative, a regroupment which claims to be to the left of the GSF and which had a successful profile at the mobilizations against the European summit in Thessalonica in June 2003.

A second list was organized by the Anti-Capitalist Alliance, a front for the SEK (Socialist Workers' Organization, sister group of the British SWP). Like the NAR among the biggest organisations on the far left, the SEK has organized successive regroupments which are merely extensions around it and which have nothing to do with unitary efforts at regroupment like the GSF. This Alliance is one such regroupment, invented for the elections and representing nobody other than the SEK.

Finally, another small part of the extra-parliamentary left cooperated with Synaspismos at these elections. The description given by comrade François Verammen in IV 356 is only a partial account. [\[1\]](#) Because in comparison with the last elections, the only addition to the Synaspismos alliance is a group of cadres expelled from the KKE as well as the DEA (Workers' Internationalist Left, a recent split from the SEK). The KOE (of Maoist origin), the biggest

of the extra-parliamentary left organizations inside the GSF, finally decided not to participate. Thus, it is inexact to say that the electoral regroupment around Synaspismos constitutes something new and promising. This initiative corresponds more to the hopes for a common left action that have developed during recent mobilizations. And the alliance also includes forces that have successfully cooperated inside the GSF with OKDE-Spartakos, the Greek section of the Fourth International. But whatever, the electoral alliance around Synaspismos has not expressed the social dynamic that the GSF represents.

The indispensable anti-capitalist regroupment

For our part, we work then for the formation of a force “to the left of the left”, politically independent of social liberal social democracy. What seems to us indispensable is that a credible alternative to the left of Synaspismos is built. It is this that would allow us to influence its base in the case (the most probable in our view, if we look at the path of the “left turn” of the PRC in Italy) of the emergence of a plural left “Greek style”. In this perspective what is indispensable is a process of recomposition of the anti-capitalist left which breaks down the barriers separating the biggest forces of the Greek far left.

On this front, there is some work to do. For example, the DEA wants neither a broad party of the left (of the PRC type, an enlarged Synaspismos), nor unity with the main organizations of the anti-capitalist left. Its action consists of propaganda at the base of Synaspismos for its own separate organizational construction. What we need to build, through a patient process of convergence and recomposition, is quite simply a new left, anti-capitalist, pluralist, feminist, ecologist, at the side of the workers' struggles and the radical combats of youth. And our current role is to constitute a “bridge” between the main forces of the anti-capitalist left.

This article has been collectively discussed inside OKDE-Spartakos.

[1] See François Vercammen, [“Preparing for Battle”](#), IV 356, February 2004.