

31.05.2010 - Greece: The decisions are taken abroad

Interview mit Yannis Almpanis vom Netzwerk für politische und soziale Rechte

From the popular mood in Greece we get a contradicting picture: On the one hand there is massive popular anger and large attacks on banks. On the other hand media report a majority of the greek > population would "understand" the measures of the government. What is true, and how do You explain this contradiction?

You shouldn't believe corporate media! This is a general attitude, but these days it is more than ever valid. Evening TV news are really the voice of the IMF and the EU. The real picture is that the vast majority of the population believe that the austerity plan is unfair, This is indicated by the polls, but it is evident as well to the people involved in politics. And it couldn't be otherwise: it is common sense to think that passing the bill of the crisis to the poor isn't something fair... The general feeling is that IMF, EU and our government force those who have no responsibility to pay the crisis. Furthermore, there is also a feeling of national humiliation. Many feel that Greece in no longer a normal eurozone country and the important decisions for its future are taken abroad. On the other hand, thinking that the measures are unfair doesn't necessarily means that you are ready to get in the streets. There is a great number of people who thing that resistance is vain. It is already difficult to beat your own government. Who on earth can you beat this holly neoliberal alliance of the Greek government, IMF, EU, international financial markets, Germany etc. But as time goes by, anger seems to become stronger than despair. The participation and the militant passion of the general strike on May 5 surprised even the most optimist activists.

The public sector union has announced a prolonged general strike. Is it backed by private sector unions as well? Is there a perspective of a prolonged general strike in the whole country?

There is not such thing as a prolonged strike. Until now we had 5 general strikes and between June 15 to June 20 we are going to have the 6th. These strikes are organized by the general Confederation of Workers and by the Confederation of the public workers. One of the main instruments of the government-media propaganda was/is the division between public and private sector employees. They try to convince society that the public sector employees are responsible for the crisis because they are lazy, they are paid too much etc. But the austerity pan affects everybody and this creates the material platform

for the unity of the struggle. But you should always have in mind that strike in the private sector is too difficult. In the majority of business there is no trade union organization and practically strike is forbidden (you get fired in case...)

How do parties left to Pasok reply to the crisis? What demands do they put forward to solve the crisis? And do they gain credibility with their positions?

The main parliamentary parties KKE (Communist party) and SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) have rejected firmly the austerity plan and the so called "European mechanism of aid". Their politics is built on the basis "we won't pay for their crisis" and "no sacrifice by the workers". But KKE insists on an extreme sectarian tactics (it still organizes demonstrations separately from anybody else) and SYRIZA suffers from severe internal confrontations. For the moment the polls don't show any political gains of the left.

Or is it mainly the extreme right who profits from the crisis?

No the extreme right doesn't profit from the crisis. In fact the extreme right is the best ally of the socialist government and the only opposition party which votes in favour of the austerity plan in the parliament. So they cannot gain anything because they are part of the political system picture.

What are the positions on Europe left to Pasok? Is there growing nationalism also amongst the radical left?

First of all Europe and EU are not the same thing and we shouldn't confuse them. Having the impression that the question is about EU, I will answer about that. The Communist party traditionally demands the exit of Greece from the EU. Synaspismos, which is the main component of SYRIZA, is traditionally pro EU. In SYRIZA take also part groups which share the position of the exit of EU and groups which adopt an anti-EU position without demanding the country's exit (mainly groups referring to the Trotskyist tradition). In general, SYRIZA's position is that it rejects the Maastricht stability pact and it calls the government not to obey it. No, there is no growing nationalism, but there is a growing anti-EU (and specially anti-German) feeling in the Greek society

What do left critical pro-European currents expect from Europe?



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Nothing. Nothing at all. Nobody in Greece expects any more something from EU. EU's neoliberal policy is even harder than that of IMF. But there is a lot of things that can be done together with the European workers, specially in the framework of European Social Forum. It is time to build international coordination of our resistance to the crisis.