

Greece to Europe's Bankers: We Are Hungry and We Are Angry, Very Angry

by Dean Andromidas

May 10—The Greek elections May 6 delivered a resounding “No!” to the bankers’ brutal austerity that has crushed the Greek economy and the living conditions of the population. As one former Greek politician said, “Through these elections the Greeks have given two very loud messages: ‘We are hungry; and we are angry, very very angry.’” The electorate has overthrown the Greek political class, represented by the Pan Hellenic Socialist Party (Pasok) and the conservative New Democracy, which have ruled the country since the overthrow of the military junta in 1975.

Despite “winning” the election, New Democracy garnered only 18.96% of the vote, down by more than 14% from the last election. It won 108 seats in the 300-seat parliament only because under the Greek Constitution, the party with the most votes automatically gets an extra 50 seats! Pasok received no more than 13.23%, down more than 30 percentage points. It will have 41 seats. Most of its former ministers were not even re-elected. These included the hated Yiorgos Papaconstantinou, the Finance Minister who signed the first austerity Memorandum with the International Monetary Fund, and then became Energy and Environmental Minister, from which post he pushed for Project Helios, which would spend billions building solar parks to export electricity to pay off the debts he had negotiated.

Thus, the two parties that supported the hated Memorandum, drafted by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the IMF, known as the Troika, with its crushing austerity measures, could only muster about 32% of the vote. Every other party, including several of those which will not be entering parliament, was against the Memorandum.

The big winner was the anti-Memorandum Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) which received 16.73%, a 300% increase over its previous vote, and will have 52 seats. The second-biggest winner was the anti-Memorandum Independent Greeks, formed only a few weeks

ago, which won 10.57%, or 33 seats. Other parties were the Communist Party (KKE) with 8.46%, and 26 seats; picking up protest votes, the extreme-right Golden Dawn won 6.96%, or 21 seats; and Democratic Left, which while not as strongly anti-Memorandum as the others, won 6.09%, for 19 seats. Its leader Fotis Kouvelis said he will not join a New Democracy-Pasok government.

A Chance for a Different Course

Following the announcement of the election results, the Syriza leader, 38-year-old Alexis Tsipras, issued a statement declaring: “We strongly believe that the country’s salvation will be achieved through the rejection of these barbaric measures, through relief from recession and the looting of pensions and salaries, through the cancellation of austerity measures and their replacement with measures to boost the economy and to tax built-up wealth so that funds are found to help the weaker sections” of society. He concluded that, “after the people have spoken, [there is] a chance for a radically different course. . . . We issue a clear warning to all parties, inside the country and outside the country, to respect the expression of the electorate.”

Earlier, in a post-election statement, Tsipras said the austerity policies of German Chancellor Angela Merkel “have suffered a crushing defeat.” He said his party’s showing in the elections constituted a “strong message to Greece and to Europe to overturn the status quo,” and “a message of peaceful revolution.”

Democratic Left leader Kouvelis declared, “The [election] results show people’s frustration and anger.”

A Greek collaborator of the Schiller Institute said that now is the time to push very hard to get the Glass-Steagall reform and a Marshall Plan for Southern Europe directly into the hands of the the Syriza, the Independent Greeks, and the Democratic Left, and anyone else who wants to save Greece.



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Alexis Tsipras, leader of the Syriza (Radical Left) party, was the biggest winner in the Greek elections; he is calling for rejection of the “barbaric measures” of the IMF “Memorandum,” and for expanding the economy.

The call for a “Marshall Plan for Southern Europe—Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal,” issued by Schiller Institute chairwoman Helga Zepp-LaRouche, in Greek translation, has begun to circulate in Greece. Presented in an April 27 webcast, “Dialogue with Spain and Portugal,” Zepp-LaRouche called upon the engineers, scientists, students, trade unionists, and others” throughout these nations “to collaborate in assembling the bold reconstruction program required to survive the disintegration of the present global financial system.”

While Europe’s bankers were betting on a New Democracy-Pasok coalition coming to power, to continue their occupation of Greece, the two parties did not win enough seats to form a government. Under the Constitution, the mandate to form a government goes to the party winning the largest vote. If it fails, the mandate goes to the second, and then the third party. As of this writing, New Democracy leader Antonis Samaras failed in his bid to form a government, as did Syriza’s Tsipras, and Pasok’s Evangelos Venizelos. Now it is up to President Karolos Papoulias to attempt to form a national unity government, which, as of this writing, it appears he will fail to do; if so, new elections will be called.

The reaction to the elections from Euroland hardliners and the European Commission is to threaten Greece with expulsion from Euroland, and, if not from planet Earth, at least from the European Union. But, these are simply scare tactics, since if Greece is “thrown

out” of the euro, it will not only immediately default, it will bring the Eurozone down with it, while “investors” lose all confidence the euro and start pulling their investments and deposits out of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and other euro countries.

Both Pasok and New Democracy are using these hollow threats in an attempt to win back votes if fresh elections are held. But they are likely to fail. According to the first post-election poll, Syriza would come in with 27.7%, giving it 128 seats, enough to form a minority government.

New Leadership Coming Forward

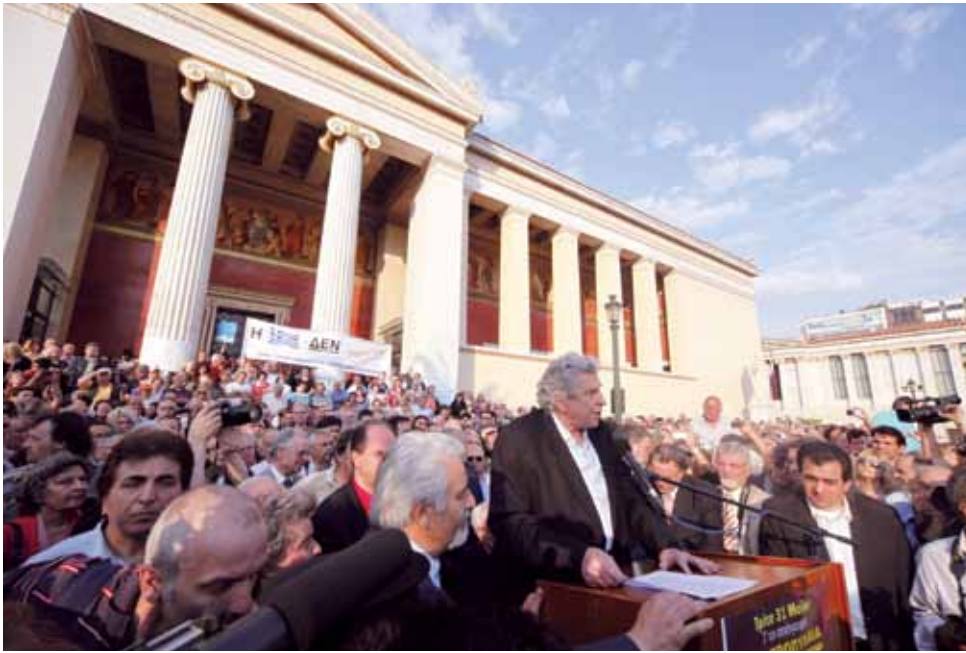
Syriza, which now has a fair shot at winning the next election, is a coalition of left-wing parties, including elements of the old Communist Party. They have won the support of the new resistance movement founded by Greek composer Mikos Theodorakis, whom Tsipras met shortly after the election, along with the other founders of the movement, Prof. George Kassinatis, and the celebrated World War II Resistance leader Manolis Glezos. The latter, in fact, won a seat in parliament on the Syriza ticket.

Theodorakis issued the following statement: “I support with all my strength Alexis Tsipras in his efforts to form a government that will terminate the Memorandum and will seek to recover the sovereignty of our country. I urge all patriotic Greeks to give him creative help to lead the way in Greece to self-reliance, progress, and the a new Renaissance.”

Following the failure of Tsipras to form a government, Theodorakis issued a second statement, asserting that if there are fresh elections, he will be “present.” “I will take part in elections; however, with whom and how is something I will announce later. I will be on the front line.”

In an open letter to the leadership of the EU, including European Commission president José Manuel Barroso, and European Central Bank president Mario Draghi, declared that the reality of the Greek economy has demonstrated the failure of the Memorandum and can only lead to “a humanitarian crisis.” If the policy continues, it “not only threatens social cohesion and stability in Greece, but also is a source of instability for the EU itself and for the Eurozone,” he wrote. It calls for a solution on the “European level.”

Although his attempt to form a government has failed, Tsipras took the opportunity to articulate his party’s policy, setting out six requirements for any agree-



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The legendary composer and political activist Mikos Theodorakis (speaking) has endorsed the efforts of Tsipras to form a government, terminate the austerity Memorandum, and “to recover the sovereignty of our country.”

ment with other parties: 1) immediate cancellation of the terms of the EU-IMF Memorandum; 2) the cancellation of the law that ends collective contracts; 3) changes to the electoral system; 4) an end to parliamentary immunity; 5) public oversight of Greek banks; and 6) the formation of a debt inspection committee that will investigate whether any of Greece’s debt can be termed “odious.”

On the other end of the political spectrum, the center-right Independent Greeks led by Panos Kammenos—a former member of the New Democracy who, along with ten others, left the party because they refused to vote for the Memorandum—has now become one of the major actors in Greek politics. In his first address before his new parliamentary faction, Kammenos, echoing the late French President Charles de Gaulle, said, “We must support Greece, and a Europe of the Nations, and not the bankers of Europe.”

Kammanos said that Greece needs a “national solution right here and now,” and said his party had pulled off a “miracle” by winning 33 seats in the election. He said that 68% of the electorate had voted against the Memorandum. “We are the anti-Memorandum front. The fight to liberate the country comes above all else. . . .”

As a basis of cooperation with other parties, he called for agreement on basic principles similar to those outlined by Syriza’s Tsipras, including the termination of loan agreements, the termination of the Memorandum, and the removal of burdensome and contemptible debt, as well as the punishment of those guilty of bringing Greece into this situation.

Drinking the Kool-Aid

The only option that would prevent fresh elections is for the President to try to organize a unity government that would have to include New Democracy, Pasok, and Syriza, along with one or two others, per-

haps around the idea of “renegotiating the Memorandum.” But Syriza and the other anti-Memorandum parties would have to make compromises that would only destroy their credibility. As one Greek political observer said, “renegotiating” the Memorandum without a credible alternative policy would be like “drinking the Kool-Aid,” with the inevitable Jonestown-like political massacre that would follow.

While the anti-Memorandum front is morally committed to overthrowing these policies, it has yet to put forward a comprehensive alternative that addresses the international crisis, the ultimate cause of Greece’s and all of Europe’s unfolding tragedy.

“You need a credible alternative, and the Schiller Institute’s Marshall Plan for the Mediterranean is very credible,” Associate Prof. George Tsobanoglou of the University of the Aegean told *EIR*. “We are in a transition. It is not just Greece; we are now in a regional crisis. Spain, Portugal, Italy, and even France, are in this crisis. The Schiller Institute’s Mediterranean Marshall plan is the equivalent of a Glass-Steagall for Southern Europe.” Tsobanoglou said that if France adopted this policy, it being both Atlantic and Mediterranean, and with its interest in Africa, it would be in the best place to take leadership in this effort.