

## INTERVENTION TO THE NATIONWIDE MEETING OF SYRIZA

The elections of September 20 are a landmark for the country and the Left, SYRIZA. It is a key event for the European left as well, which, despite the embarrassment caused by the swift developments after the referendum, continues to monitor the Left in Greece and its attempts to re-assume the responsibility of government power. However, these elections will be a landmark with a different content and with different things at stake compared with the elections of January 25. The time is minimal and the obstacles are big, but we are all obliged to organize the struggle for a winning result; for a self-sufficient majority government of SYRIZA, the formation of which will not depend on the mood and the policies of parties whose program is incompatible with the program of SYRIZA.

At the same time, we need to formulate a convincing alternative plan - which we did not have - with the contribution and participation of society, and with a meaningful relationship with the European left, leading us out of the memoranda and the neoliberal paths. We need to trust the people and the radical social movements, even if they contradict aspects of our policy. This race must be given with the values and the ideas of the Left as an arsenal, with perseverance, but also with a self-critical spirit vis-à-vis the mistakes that brought defeat and led several individuals to demobilisation. Our daily action needs to be permeated by the steady objective of the transformation of the society and the economy of the country, as perceived by the movement-oriented and radical Left in our era.

### **THE PARTY CONGRESS THAT DID NOT HAPPEN**

Faced with such a situation that is replete with difficulties and multiple risks for the country and the Left, we proposed at the meeting of the Central Committee, back then as 53+, a way out for the party and the government that was as feasible as possible. The occurrence of an extraordinary congress immediately, in September, would enable the members and the organizations of SYRIZA to discuss coherently and consciously the new strategy that we have to process in the new, extremely difficult conditions. We would discuss very carefully and with a unifying spirit about the heavy tactical defeat that we faced, and the immediate plan that we need to organise so that this tactical defeat does not turn into a strategic defeat. To prevent this, the party and the government would form a plan of unburdening-disengagement from the Memorandum and its coercions, together with an overall radical plan of profound changes, which would be put forward to the electorate as a programme of struggle.

This process, importantly, would constitute the right environment and provide the appropriate ground to discuss the problems of the party without divisions. Otherwise, it would become evident before the eyes of the party's people whether some would take advantage of defeat as an opportunity to cause a deep wound in the party body, in order to implement a plan that would actually shrink the field of action and dry out the capacity to reflect.

Besides, the comrades who formed the Popular Unity by leaving the party, with their deficient perspective on what we have been going through in recent years in Greece and Europe, were pushing SYRIZA to the place of a primarily anti-memorandum party and not to that of an integrated and complex left-wing political organization. At

the same time, they damaged a main characteristic of the physiognomy of SYRIZA, i.e. the institutionalized creative coexistence of different currents and tendencies.

## **THE CONSEQUENCES**

The decision of the leadership of the government, which chooses to speak as leadership of the party as well on a case-by-case basis, to not organise the extraordinary congress that was decided by a large majority at the Central Committee, was mistaken and we are already experiencing the dramatic effects of this decision on the party and the Youth. Demobilizations, departures and resignations are observed on a large scale and at all levels [MPs, members of the Central Committee, members of prefectural committees, members of party organizations]. These are human resources that during the entire previous period fought with selflessness, and we do not forget this. We will work hard to prevent phenomena of cannibalism, to maintain effective channels of communication, to keep alive the idea of unity and the re-establishment of the Left in a radical and movement-oriented direction.

The leadership must stand towards this phenomenon self-critically and must immediately start reversing it. The signal sent to the ordinary member or friend of the party was, unfortunately, - in particular during the period of the seven months of SYRIZA governance - that the only duty he / she had was to monitor government decisions and support them in society. The party member or friend understood this as the culmination of a pre-existing choice to bypass and cancel the party from 2012 onwards. He / she linked that with views claiming the need for an unmediated relationship of the leader with the people, as well as the supposed fact that party forces act as a burden and prevent the development of the influence of the government. However, the parties of the Left are not made by leaders, but by principles, ideas, programs and the struggles of its people.

The issues that have accumulated in the body of the party require holding a regular congress immediately after the elections, when this will be convenient in terms of time. It should be a congress of reflection and strategic redefinition. The say and decisions belong to the party and its members.

## **GOVERNMENT, PARTY, LISTS**

Our today's meeting cannot replace the extraordinary congress. However, we respect this process, the presence of a large number of comrades here, and their anxiety, and we will contribute so that the party proceedings will prove effective. Guidelines should be adopted that will radically change the climate and will be consistent with the mood of our people who, by insisting and remaining faithful to the historical SYRIZA, want a government of a different quality.

Even starting this weekend, we can send out the signal that we will follow an action that will seek the liberation of the Greek society and economy from the trap of the Memorandum and sweltering austerity, will mitigate or offset the recessionary impact of the agreement, will support the groups that are most at risk, will offer space for rights, for autonomous movements and initiatives (antiracist, feminist, ecological, anti-war, anti-prohibition, anti-authoritarian, initiatives for the rights of LGBT, prisoners, the homeless, etc.).

Today, more than ever, we need a party that will be a protagonist in shaping the basic directions rather than a party that is decommissioned; a party with substantial collective proceedings, which is democratic in its operation, radical, with social action, producing concrete policy.

We need ballots for a battle, with an open mind, and without the participation of 'stakeholders' - we paid the price for them already. At the current juncture, when the questions and doubts on the political orientation of SYRIZA are multiple, the finalization of the list will either strengthen or mitigate the negative impressions. For our part, we will oppose till the end those attitudes and individuals who moved to the opposite direction of that of the left, who fought the left and signify a conservative world, in terms of values.

### **THE IDEOLOGICAL - THEORETICAL FIELD**

It is urgent for the party - which for a long period and even now has been a source of inspiration and an example for the international left - to receive the care that it deserves, also in the ideological - theoretical field. The complexity of the problems today requires a departure from the political empiricism that has prevailed in the party, in terms of ideological, theoretical and political content. We have to break the barren circle of continuous leadership recycling, which moves new comrades who have theoretical training, contemporary experience, and scientific and political knowledge, to the sidelines of auxiliary party functions.

We need to discuss, for example, whether the party is a mere supportive mechanism for claiming, undertaking and exercising governmental power, as shown so far; Whether we want the party to act, both before and after taking the government, as a transformative agent of society, not necessarily through the exercise of power but also through the party's direct action within the society. Whether the maturation of the necessary transformation takes place within the social body. Whether the independent action of the party - a 'porous party' and not an 'enclosed mechanism' - is being intensified for it to act as a driving force for the government. We need to discuss these things, much more now, at a time when the government policy more or less conflicts with the program of the ruling party due to the emergency situation.

### **WILL WE MAKE IT?**

Can SYRIZA respond to such a task? Are we perhaps asking too much? It is true that our party needed more elements to correspond to its historical role. Nevertheless, its foundational and historical material contains the characteristics that may allow it to become such a party. We need to work now. The leadership must turn self-critically to the party, to this body today, to the people. It should deny what they attribute to it, i.e. the thoughts and plans to diversify and shift the party's support base, an intention that is completely different from the legitimate attempt to extend that base.

We who sign this text come from the movement of 53+, a grouping that operated within SYRIZA and worked for its unity, its collective democratic function, and its left-wing, radical and movement-oriented direction. We accept the part of the

responsibility that falls in our part, even for the things that we did not prevent or did not attempt to prevent through our intervention.

This two-day event is crucial. We are convinced that the collective answers that will be given here will largely shape the course of the project and the stance of thousands of fighters inside and outside SYRIZA.

Will we succeed with our intervention? It is more difficult but also more necessary than ever. It will depend, however, on the effort of all of us.