**Can SYRIZA Break with Austerity?**

With the Greek elections approaching, SYRIZA, the Coalition of the Radical Left, is leading in the polls. What will, and what can, a possible SYRIZA government do? The preparation of governing and the challenges international solidarity will face if SYRIZA wins the elections was the topic of an evening conversation hosted by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung's New York Office on January 15. The fact that more than 50 participants came to the RLS-NYC office in Midtown Manhattan shows that the potential SYRIZA victory has already created a lot of excitement among the international left.

The discussion was kicked off by Andreas Günther, head of the International Department at DIE LINKE headquarters in Berlin, who pointed out that the economic and social crisis in Greece is the product of the “austeritarian” Troika regime led by the German chancellor, Angela Merkel. Greece, he stated, will need support from other EU member states in order to cope with the humanitarian crisis, and we need to find ways to make that happen.

Michalis Spourdalakis, founding member of SYRIZA and professor of political sociology at the University of Athens, then laid out the challenges a left government in Greece is going to face, including the deeply embedded, anti-democratic structures that make up the “deep state.” Natassa Romanou, who works at the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and is a member of SYRIZA New York, emphasized the hardships that the Greek people have been confronted with, and how difficult daily life has become for the working class – while the money supposedly used to “rescue Greece” was in fact spent to rescue the profits of big banks.

The lively discussion then turned to the challenges of a potential SYRIZA government to overcome resistance from other states, particularly in the north of the European Union. We need to think seriously about what we can do to support SYRIZA, argued RLS-NYC Co-director Albert Scharenberg, not least because the example of SYRIZA also holds lessons for the U.S. left: come together, put aside ideological in-fighting, and stay radical by focusing on the needs of the people.

Pictures of the event: https://www.flickr.com/photos/rosaluxnyc/sets/72157650390520551/