

Why is the Spanish media promoting Esther Vivas of the Anti-Capitalist Left?

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As Spanish capitalism accelerates its austerity measures it fears that public opposition expressed by the eruption of the “indignants” (indignados) or M-15 movement is a prelude to something far more dangerous—a mass movement of the working class.

That is why the ruling elite is in need of a new mechanism to prop up and cover for the social democrats and the Stalinists.

Esther Vivas, leader and spokeswoman of the Anti-capitalist Left (Izquierda Anticapitalista, IA) is receiving an extraordinary degree of media attention, out of all proportion to the size and influence of her group. IA, like the *Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste* in France and Italy’s *Sinistra Critica*, is affiliated with the United Secretariat, which split from the Fourth International under the political leadership of Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel in 1953.

The International Committee of the Fourth International was established to defend Marxism against this tendency, which abandoned the struggle to build independent revolutionary parties in favour of acting as a left pressure group on existing mass reformist and Stalinist parties and promoting anti-Marxist ideologies within the working class.

Vivas, aged 36, typifies the affluent layer of academics, journalists, union officials and professional “activists” on which the Pabloites and other ex-left groups are based, and whose interests they advance. In her blog, Vivas defines herself as an “activist in a variety of social movements in Barcelona”, participating in “antiglobalisation campaigns, campaigns against external debt, in favour of food sovereignty and critical consumption, against climate change, and in various editions of the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum.”

Vivas operates as part of a pseudo-left think-tank that focuses in particular on examining political and social

dissent. She is a member of the Centre of Studies about Social Movements (CEMS) at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, and collaborates with the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGOP) at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She researches the social and environmental impact “of the dominant agro-industrial model, the alternatives to this model, as well as the study of social movements.”

CEMS, a state-funded institute, was founded in 2007 to examine the “factors which cause the emergence” of social movements, the “debates and controversies” in them and their “impacts and consequences”. IGOP is concerned with “public policies of security, vigilance, technologies of control, management of citizen security”.

Like the rest of the ex-left, Vivas conceals her pro-bourgeois politics beneath a veneer of liberal radical posturing over issues of feminism and other forms of identity politics, the espousal of debt relief for underdeveloped countries, fair trade, ethical consumerism and a glorification of guerrillaism.

In 2004 she joined Alternative Space (Espacio Alternativo, EA) the successor organization of the Pabloite Revolutionary Communist League (LCR). EA was one of the many factions within the United Left (Izquierda Unida), founded by the Communist Party (PCE) in 1986—together with a coalition of PSOE dissidents, liberals, nationalists, left groups and Greens—to pressure the big-business Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) to the left.

Like their social-democratic counterparts across Europe, the PSOE moved in the opposite direction, supporting militarism abroad and austerity measures at home. Broad sections of the population came to regard the IU as a mere adjunct of the PSOE. Fearing their own complete discrediting, the Pabloites decided to break organizationally from their Stalinist allies in July 2008 and take their political distance from the social democrats.

But in all essentials, their political aim remained the same—to divert radicalized sections of workers and youth back under the control of the labour and trade union bureaucracies.

Under the banner of “anti-capitalism”, the Pabloites offered their new parties as a home for any petty bourgeois tendency professing hostility to a neo-liberal market agenda.

Recognising the political usefulness of such a project, the capitalist media did everything possible to promote it. This task fell above all to the pro-PSOE publications such as *El País* and *Público*, owned by Mediapro, founded by an ex-Pabloite, Jaume Roures. During the 2009 European elections, *Público* devoted several articles to IA, including an interview with Vivas in which she made her appeal to “combative trade unionists and social activists, disappointed and suspicious of political organizations.”

Last December, when air traffic controllers stopped working on health and safety grounds and in opposition to 40 percent wage cuts, the PSOE imposed a “state of alarm” and sent in the army. The strike was attacked by the PSOE, the IU and the main trade unions. IA published a series of for-the-record statements on the state of alarm, but opposed the controllers’ wildcat action and refused to lift a finger in their defence.

In February, IA revealed where it stood in the imperialist intervention against the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi. *Público* published an article written by Vivas and Josep Maria Antentas, “The heartbeat of the Arab revolution”, which formally called for other “internationalist and solidarity alternatives” in opposition to “military intervention.” However, they advocated “the political and economic international isolation of the regime, and the unconditional supply of weapons to the rebels”—exactly what the European powers and the US have done.

The promotion of IA and Vivas was stepped up a notch after the eruption outside of the control of the official parties and unions earlier this year of the *indignados* movement—driven by anger over the austerity measures imposed by the PSOE and the regional governments.

The movement ultimately failed due to the absence of a clear programme, perspective and political leadership. A critical role in formulating the demands of “no-politics”, “no leadership” and a “horizontal” structure—i.e., no challenge to the dominant politics, no analysis of the role of those who have contributed to the present crisis, and no possibility of developing the consciousness of the working class and youth—was played by IA. Vivas

lectured and talked within the camps and assemblies throughout Catalonia.

IA leader, Miguel Romero, boasted, “We have been present at the rallies since the beginning. We have participated in the drawing up of the Manifesto. We have very good relations with the non-sectarian autonomous current, which is very present in the movement. In a general way, it is necessary to be very prudent and reserved, notably in relation to self-affirmation: flags, stickers, and so on.”

On May 20, Vivas and Antentas were interviewed by *El País*, which referred to them merely as “specialists in social movements.” Two days later, Vivas was invited to a debate on Catalan public television and then appeared in a 30-minute documentary programme by the same channel on the *indignados*, which was later broadcast by *Al-Jazeera*.

Vivas continues to have interviews and articles published in newspapers and to appear in flagship radio broadcasts. She has co-authored three books published in less than two months—*The voices from the squares* (Las veus de las places), *The voices of the M-15* (Las voces del 15-M) and *The indignados Rebellion. M15 Movement: Real Democracy Now* (La Rebelión de los indignados. Movimiento 15M: Democracia Real, ¡Ya!').

Vivas is adamant that in the camps “no one represents us, we are people represented on an individual basis, and it has been proven that processes of change have to be collective, rejecting any leaderships.”

“It is the system which promotes leaderships, individualism; this is the philosophy of the capitalist system, divide and rule,” she insists.

For Vivas to say that leadership is a divide and rule tactic of the ruling elite is an open declaration of her anti-Marxist credentials. It confirms that the Pabloites are a special detachment of the bureaucracy, working on its behalf to oppose Trotskyism and its insistence that “The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.”

The IA’s task is to oppose the construction of a genuinely revolutionary leadership, a Spanish section of the ICFI.



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