

SYRIZA leader visits Barcelona to prop up Greens and Stalinists

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Last Thursday Alexis Tsipras, leader of the largest opposition group in Greece, SYRIZA, attended a public meeting organized by Iniciativa per Catalunya–Esquerra Unida I Alternativa (ICV-EUiA–Initiative for Catalonia Greens–United and Alternative Left). His visit was just three days before the regional elections in Catalonia.

The ICV-EUiA is a coalition of petty bourgeois fake lefts and remnants of the ecology movement fused with the Stalinists. This pseudo-left party defines itself as “ecologist”, “socialist” and “feminist” and in favour of the right to “self-determination” of the Basque Country and Catalonia.

During the regional elections campaign, its leader Joan Herrera has stated that the main objective is to “defeat the dogmatic policies of austerity.” Naturally not a word was said of its sister party in the southern region of Andalusia, Izquierda Unida (IU–United Left), which is currently imposing €1.5 billion of cuts in collaboration with the Socialist Party.

The ICV-EUiA ruled Catalonia with the Catalan section of the Socialist Party and the Catalan separatists of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya from 2003 to 2009. After the global financial collapse erupted in 2008, José Luis Zapatero’s Socialist Party (PSOE) government, with the assistance of the trade unions, began imposing massive spending cuts, cutting wages and pensions and attacking working conditions.

In Catalonia the ruling coalition did the same, imposing 5 percent cuts in civil servants’ salaries and public workers, and reducing by 5 percent government expenses in public sector enterprises in 2009 with the support of ICV-EUiA.

During the US-NATO war on Libya, the ICV voted in favour of the war that has led to the death of 50,000 lives, left a country in ruins and installed an imperialist

puppet regime. Its programme calls for a common European foreign policy because “only the [European] Union will be able to develop its own foreign policy mechanisms to have its own voice in the world.” It calls for the strengthening of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) to counterpoise to the US-dominated NATO.

The ICV-EUiA held the region’s Ministry of Home Affairs portfolio when it took part in a coalition government from 2006 to 2009, controlling the infamous regional police. In 2009 the regional minister defended the police who were criticized by the Barcelona Law Association for the “extreme violence, typical of other times and intolerable in a democratic system” shown to students protesting university reforms.

The ICV-EUiA campaign has heavily promoted Catalan nationalism, which is being whipped up by the ruling *Convergència i Unió* to divert attention from its massive austerity measures. So far the ruling government has imposed three austerity packages totaling over €5 billion on education, health care and social services, while claiming that separation from Spain would mean such cuts would not be necessary.

The nationalism promoted by the ICV-EUiA, under the slogan the “right-to-decide”, is in reality their “right” to create a mini-state that could be made more attractive for the global corporate elite through tax cuts and stepped-up exploitation of the Catalan working class. It serves to politically demobilize workers and to prevent them from advancing their own independent interests in a unified struggle.

The public meeting held in the working-class neighborhood of Sants in Barcelona attended by Tsipras attracted an audience of older members of ICV-EUiA and young workers and students who came to

hear the leader of SYRIZA. The hall was full and some people had to stand for an hour during the whole meeting.

After the main leaders of ICV-EUiA spoke on the crisis, Tsipras mouthed a series of meaningless phrases. He advocated a “real union” of European peoples against the troika—the European Union, International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank—and its austerity policies, especially from the southern European countries.

The “electoral battle” in Catalonia is important, he added, because South Europe is in the “epicenter of the neoliberal earthquake”, and urged support for the ICV-EUiA so as “to continue the struggle so as to change the policies imposed so far.”

“In Catalonia,” he continued, “you can stop these policies supporting and voting for my companions who want to fight to create a completely different atmosphere.”

Joan Herrera, leader of ICV-EUiA, stated that Tsipras’ presence was a “declaration of principles” for the elections and that “We want to build our own SYRIZA... We must take very careful note of what they [SYRIZA] are building.”

Herrera has not been the only one in the recent period to call for a Spanish SYRIZA. On the same day, in Seville, the pseudo-left party Izquierda Anticapitalista (IA) held a public meeting inviting representatives of IA, SYRIZA, Portugal’s Bloco de Esquerda (Left Block), and the trade union SAT. IA, along with other pseudo left groups like En Lucha and El Militante, have spread illusions that SYRIZA is a radical left party. An article by Izquierda Anticapitalista describes SYRIZA in this way:

“The question of radicalism is essential. A radicalism which seeks to combine strategic perspectives to overthrow the capitalist system with concrete proposals, slated to be applied the next day after winning the elections.”

SYRIZA itself makes no claim to be seeking the overthrow of capitalism, but quite the reverse. It is a party representing the political interests of the Greek bourgeoisie and a layer of the middle class that feels its existence under threat—both from the demands for savage austerity being made by the EU, IMF and the ECB and from below in the form of the explosive opposition this has generated in the working class. Its

stated aim is to persuade the EU to lessen the pace of austerity, while maintaining Greek membership of the EU and use of the euro currency at all costs.

Above all, it is a party that is preparing to succeed the unstable New Democracy-led government in Greece in order to control and suppress workers’ protests.

During the elections campaign in July, SYRIZA declared it would reverse all previous cuts. At the Barcelona meeting, Tsipras made no such pledge. The last package of more than €13.5 billion in cuts, together with extensive labor market “reforms”, could have been stopped three weeks ago had SYRIZA deputies resigned in mass. This would have legally prevented the last austerity package and forced snap elections, whose most probable victor would have been SYRIZA. But Tsipras had pledged to act responsibly.

In one of his latest interviews to the German weekly *Die Zeit*, Tsipras blamed “the Greek government” and “the Greek people” for bearing a “great responsibility” for the debt crisis.



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