

Former Spanish anti-evictions leader involved in new political manoeuvre

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Last week Ada Colau, the former spokeswoman and co-founder of the anti-evictions organisation, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Mortgage Victims Platform, PAH), announced the formation of a new party.

Guanyem Barcelona (Let's Win Barcelona), will stand in the May 2015 local elections if it can secure 30,000 signatures.

The new party is designed to divert the opposition of the Spanish working class into another cul-de-sac. Its formation, on a thoroughly unprincipled and opportunist basis, is proof of the bankruptcy of the politics of "autonomy" and horizontalism which accompanied the anti-evictions protests and the *indignados* movement with which it was closely linked.

The inaugural meeting held in the working class neighbourhood of Raval was attended by 1,800 people. Among those publicly supporting Colau were Joan Herrera and Ricard Gomà from the Catalan Green Party *Inicitaiva per Catalunya Verds* (ICV), David Fernández from the fake-left separatist party *Candidatura de Unitat Popular* (CUP) and David Companyón of the Stalinist-led coalition *Esquerra Unida I Alternativa* (EuiA).

Also attending were spokesmen of Podemos (We Can), a party which came from nowhere to become the fourth-largest political force in the last European elections, securing 1.2 million votes (eight percent). Podemos is led by academic and TV presenter Pablo Iglesias and was initiated by the Anticapitalist Left (*Izquierda Anticapitalista*, IA).

Prior to the meeting, Colau told a press conference that Guanyem Barcelona's main aim is to win the local elections, "not to occupy any position [in the local government] but to put it in the citizens' service." Its

manifesto makes hollow calls for a "democratic rebellion" to "re-save democracy kidnapped by the powers" and for Barcelona to become a promoter of "honesty amongst those who govern and [to] stop the mafia connivance between politics and money."

It portrays the capitalist crisis as simply due to the mismanagement of corrupt politicians or "the caste," the term used by the fake-left to denote the main establishment parties.

Like Podemos when it was launched in January, the new party has still, in the words of Colau, to "finish defining the project." The "finished project" of Podemos resulted in a pro-capitalist and nationalist programme totally acceptable to the ruling class. Also like Podemos, Guanyem Barcelona is populated by academic figures, lawyers and other middle class professionals.

In her resignation letter, Colau, who rapidly rose to the status of media celebrity and made no complaints at the time, now grumbles about her over-exposure as PAH spokeswoman and the fact she could not express her own political opinions. One fact absent in the letter was the utter failure of the "leaderless" organisation she "led" for five years before she resigned in May.

What began as a militant movement against the huge number of evictions taking place in Spain, attracting genuine support amongst the working class was saddled with an extremely limited single-issue perspective. It centred on getting enough signatures for a petition to force Congress to pass a law to halt evictions, create a pool of social housing and help those who have had their homes foreclosed. Last year, after PAH presented its 1.5-million-strong petition, the ruling Popular Party government decided to support a bill. But, of course, only in order to water it down and render it meaningless.

Then the organisation sowed illusions in the European Court of Justice, whose only complaint was that the speed of evictions violated European Union consumer-protection laws.

In her resignation letter, Colau attempted to gloss over this abysmal record by claiming the PAH now has more than 200 assemblies throughout Spain and has been able to prevent 1,000 evictions. This is ridiculous! Some 350,000 families have been forced out of their homes since the property market crashed in 2008. In the year since the PP passed its so-called “anti-eviction” law and the European Court of Justice made its judgement, the number of court-ordered home evictions was 67,189.

Guanyem Barcelona’s leaders are very conscious that mass impoverishment and rising inequality caused by brutal austerity measures has led to a dramatic loss in support for the establishment parties. Some 57 percent of those surveyed in a recent poll say they do not know who to vote for, would not vote or would leave their ballot paper blank.

Colau said she made the decision not to join any existing party, even though CUP and ICV had asked her, because it was “totally incompatible with being a spokesman for the PAH” which “cannot be linked to any party” and which believes “the current party system is part of the problem.” However, her only solution is empty calls for “democratisation” around a “discourse ... of minimum [demands], of putting democracy, human rights and common sense in the centre.”

Colau explained that there were “other formations which agree with these objectives (Podemos, the CUP, the Constituent Process) and there are other formations which we have to see what point they are willing to reach up to” before making the absurd claim that “parties like ICV or ERC cannot be considered parties of the regime because although they have participated occasionally in some governments, they have not got the same generalized corruption.”

In fact, the ICV is an imperialist and pro-austerity party. It ruled Catalonia with the Catalan section of the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the Catalan separatists of ERC from 2003 to 2009 under the name “Coalition of Progress—helping to slash public-sector wages and services. In June 2010, the coalition passed an austerity plan that included cuts totalling €1.6 billion. In May

2011, the ICV supported the US-led war in Libya, with its sole Congress deputy declaring that pacifism was often “badly understood” and wrongly associated with “passivity.”

As for the ERC, it is currently working with the right-wing separatist CiU government which has approved unprecedented cuts, so harsh that the region has been dubbed “the laboratory of cuts” by the newspaper *El País*.

Both parties have been fervent advocates of separatism and the “right to decide” in the independence referendum set for November 9 this year. Colau stated on *Radio Catalonia* that “even though I have never been a secessionist, in the November 9 referendum I will vote yes-yes” as long as the separatist project is a “citizen’s process and not directed by any leadership.”

The effect of Colau’s invocation of the “citizen’s process” and “no leadership” is to provide a political amnesty for the PSOE, ICV and ERC, while preventing any political challenge to the PSOE and the trade union bureaucracy. Workers and youth are involved in something far more than a fight to pressure politicians to change course. The struggle is against the failed capitalist system itself and demands a socialist perspective and leadership.



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