



SYNASPISMOS

COALITION OF THE LEFT OF MOVEMENTS AND ECOLOGY

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European Left Party

Balkan Conference

"Developments in the South East Europe and Balkans region: European Left proposals", is the theme of a Conference to be held in Thessaloniki, 7-8 June 2008.

The Conference will take place at a Congress Center in the Thessaloniki International Fair Complex and is co-organised by the Party of European Left and SYNASPISMOS.

Alexis Tsipras, President of SYNASPISMOS and **Graziella Mascia** Vice President of the European Left Party will open the proceedings on Friday morning.

The Agenda includes the following topics:

A. "Balkan developments: struggle for peace, European security"

B. "Interbalkan cooperation: problems and prospects"

C. "Environmental interdependence-proposal for a Balkan Ecological Charter"

The aim of the Conference is for left wing parties from South East Europe and European left parties to have the opportunity to exchange views and experiences and possibly agree on a programme of common activities in the direction of promoting peaceful cooperation and harmonious coexistence for all in the region. ■

SUCCESSFUL 5TH CONGRESS OF SYNASPISMOS

Alexis Tsipras new Party President

In an atmosphere of growing influence for the party and SYRIZA, SYNASPISMOS held its 5th Congress 7-10 February 2008, in Athens, at the Faliron Athletics Complex, with the participation of 1200 delegates.

Outgoing President **Alecios Alavanos**, who had already announced that he did not wish to stand for re-election but would stay on as Chairman of the SY.RIZ.A parliamentary group, opened the proceedings and presented the main political report.

Lothar Bisky, President of the Party of European Left, spoke next and his speech was applauded warmly. In addition, Antonis Chrysostomou from AKEL and the Venezuelan Ambassador to Athens Rodrigo Samudio Chaves addressed the Congress. Many messages were sent, including one from **Evo Morales**, President of Bolivia.

After a fruitful three-day discussion, the political documents for an "alternative left political project" were approved with overwhelming majorities. (You will find extracts on our website www.syn.gr in the English section and smaller ones on page 2).

The Congress closed with the election of a new Party President and Central Political Committee. There were two candidates: **Fotis Kouvelis**, a leading left figure for many years and Parliament Group



spokesperson of SYRIZA and **Alexis Tsipras**, former youth leader and head of the Athens Municipality list of the party. Cde Tsipras was elected with 70,45%.

The 125-member Central Political Committee (CPC) was renewed by 40%. Percentage of women: 32,67% that means 40 women out of the 125 members.

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After the election of Dimitris Christofias NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR CYPRUS

A new page for Cyprus opened with the triumphant election of **Dimitris Christofias**, General Secretary of AKEL, as President of the Republic of Cyprus.

The first round of the election was held on 17 February 2008, with the DISY-supported candidate Yiannakis Kassoulidis and Dimitris Christofias polling almost the same number of votes (respectively 33,51% and 33,29%). Outgoing President Tassos Papadopoulos came third with 31%.

One week later, the run off took place and Christofias won with 53,37% to Kassoulidis' 46,63% of the vote. DIKO, EDEK and the Greens supported Christofias.

The victory of the left candidate was greeted warmly by the Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat and other Turkish Cypriot politicians and ordinary people.

SYN President Alexis Tsipras and SYRIZA Parliament Group President Alecios Alavanos sent warm congratulations to Christofias and AKEL.

Soon after the assumption of his duties, the new Cyprus President set in motion a number of initiatives.

Following a meeting between Christofias and Talat on 21 March 2008, the committees of the 8 July 2006 Agreement were formed and started working.

An additional positive step was made through a new Christofias – Talat meeting under UN auspices on 23 May 2008.

In a joint statement, which was issued after the meeting, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment for a bizonal-bicommunal federation, with a single international personality, based on political equality for the two communities. It was stated that the UN Security Council Resolutions will be the basis for the solution.

In addition, new confidence building measures between the two sides will be sought. It has been agreed that a new meeting of the two leaders will be convened during the second half of June. ■

...from the front page

SUCCESSFUL 5TH CONGRESS OF SYNASPISMOS

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New Political Secretariat

The Central Political Committee (CPC) of SYNASPISMOS, at its first meeting after its election at the 5th Congress, elected a Political Secretariat comprising of 17 members (including the Party President and the Secretary of the CPC).

Cde **Nicos Houndis** was re-elected Secretary of the Central Political Committee.

Cde **Yiannis Balafas** has now the responsibility, on behalf of the Political Secretariat, for the departments of Foreign Policy, International Relations and Greek Diaspora.

The names of PC members and their tasks are:

Evangelos **Apostolou** – *Ecology and regional development*

Yannis **Balafas** – *Foreign Policy, International Relations and the Greek Diaspora*

Stefanos **Bayorgos** – *Health policies*

Alecos **Flabouraris** – *SYRIZA Secretariat – Youth issues*

Andreas **Karitzis** – *Head of the Press Office*

Tassos **Koronakis** – *mass mobilizations and organizational matters*

Panos **Lafazanis** – *Social and economic policies*

Stathis **Leoutsakos** – *Local government*

Spyros **Lykoudis** – *Cultural policy*

Theodoros **Margaritis** – *Public administration and drugs policy*

Kostas **Marmatakis** – *Sports policy - human rights*

Sofia **Papadoyianni** – *Athens Political Organisation – Feminist policy*

Mihalis **Sabatakakis** – *European Policy – European Left Party*

Efklidis **Tsakalotos** – *Education – Theoretical issues*

In addition, the departments elected the following comrades to assume the relevant responsibility on behalf of the Central Political Committee:

Foreign Policy - Panos Trigazis, **European Policy** – Yiannis Bournous and Marika Frangaki, **International Relations** – Rena Dourou and **Greek diaspora** – Vassilis Primikiris.

Who is Alexis Tsipras

Born in Athens in 1974 Alexis Tsipras graduated from the Athens Technological University as a civil engineer while his postgraduate studies were in land surveying and planning.

He joined the left while still a high school student in the ranks of the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE) and was very active during the 1990-91 mobilisations.

As a University student he joined the ranks of the renovative left movement and was member of the Executive Board of the Union of the Civil Engineering Faculty and also served as student representative at the University Senate.

He was elected member of the Central Council of the National Students Union of Greece (EFEE) during the period 1995-1997.

In 1999 he was elected Secretary of the SYNASPISMOS YOUTH, a position he occupied up to the 3rd Congress of the Organization in March 2003. As Secretary of the SYNASPISMOS Youth he took active part in the process of creation of the Greek Social Forum and attended all the international protests and marches against neoliberal globalization.

In Synaspismos 4th Congress (December 2004) he was elected to the Central Political Committee of the party and consequently to the Political Secretariat, where he was responsible for educational and youth issues.

In the 2006 Municipal Elections he was candidate Mayor of Athens, supported by SYNASPISMOS and the allied forces of SYRIZA. He headed the list "ANOIHTI POLI" (Open City) and had a very successful election campaign, coming third (after the New Democracy and PASOK candidates) gaining 10,5% and 4 members of the Municipal Council.

He will continue to perform his tasks as Municipal Councilor of Athens alongside his duties as SYN President.

International delegations

Lothar Bisky, President of the European Left, co-president of *Die Linke of Germany*

Hilde Grammel, Communist Party of *Austria*

Nelson Estrada Iturri, Movement for Socialism (MAS) of *Bolivia*

Hermes Herrera Hernandez, representative of the Communist Party of *Cuba*, Ambassador in Greece

Antonis Chryssostomou, AKEL of *Cyprus*

Milan Neubert, Chairman of the Party of *Democratic Socialism, Czech Republic*

Jose Gordon, French Communist Party

Yvan Lemaitre, LCR (League Communiste Revolutionnaire) - France

Konstanze Kriese, *the Left, Germany*

Fabio Amato, *Communist Refoundation, Italy*

Cinzia Palazzolo, *Party of the Italian Communists*

Elias Oualid, *Communist Party, Lebanon*

Samir Abou Ghazaleh, Representative of the leadership of the PLO, Ambassador of the Palestinian Authority in Greece

Mihyar Ektami, member of the Central Committee of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

Joe Valencia, *AKBAYAN Party, Philippines*

Grzegorz Ilnicki, *New Socialists, Poland*

Wojciech Ostrowski, *New Socialists, Poland*

Maite Mola, *Communist Party, Spain*

Joseph Zisyadis, Member of Parliament, *party of Labour, Switzerland*

Haydar Ilker, Party of Freedom and Solidarity (ODP), *Turkey*

Rodrigo O. Chaves Samudio, representative of the *Unified Socialist Party*, former Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Ambassador in Greece of Venezuela.

Women's Assembly

The 5th Congress of SYNASPISMOS heralded the first ever Women's Assembly to be held as an integral part of the proceedings of a Synaspismos Congress.

The main slogan of the Assembly was: "AGAINST NEOLIBERALISM AND PATRIARCHY – FOR GENDER EQUALITY, DEMOCRACY AND PEACE".

Litsa Doudoumi, member of the Central Political Committee and responsible for the party's feminist policy, made the opening speech, where she stressed, among other things, the fact that the neoliberal onslaught threatens not only the achievements of the women's struggles but the very principles and achievements of feminism.

In the discussion that followed, the women delegates made interventions on the latest developments on gender equality issues and submitted proposals for action. The main conclusion reached was that it is now imperative, more than ever before, to promote the alliance between the feminist movement and the anti-neoliberal front.

About 150 women attended the Assembly. Cde Maite Mola, from the Communist Party of Spain, was also present and took part in the discussion.

This particular Assembly was dedicated to the International Conference of Socialist Women in 1907 in Stuttgart.

SYRIZA delegation visits Turkey

NEW STEPS FOR GREEK- TURKISH LEFT COOPERATION

On the invitation of ODP President **Ufuk Uras**, MP, a SYRIZA delegation consisting of its Parliamentary Group President **Alecios Alavanos**, MP **Yiannis Banias** and SYN CPC member **Panos Trigazis** visited Turkey from 21 to 23 February 2008.

The programme of the visit included an ODP – SYRIZA bilateral meeting and a joint press conference of **Ufuk Uras** and **Alecios Alavanos** which took place in a room of the Turkish National Assembly in Ankara.

In the Turkish capital the SYRIZA delegation had meetings with Foreign Minister **Ali Babadjan**, Turkish National Assembly President **Koksal Toptan**, CHP Parliamentary Group Vice President **Kemal Anadol** and DTP MP **Akin Birdal**, prominent human rights leader over many years.

After Ankara, the SYRIZA delegation visited Istanbul, where it met with Ecumenical Christian Orthodox Patriarch **Vartholomeos** and DISK President **Suleyman Celebi**.

Joint declaration

During their joint press Conference in Ankara **Alavanos** and **Uras** published a joint declaration stressing that: *"Peace is the only choice for the peoples of Turkey and Greece" and that "the problems in Greek – Turkish relations must and can be solved peacefully, through dialogue, on the basis of international law, not through militarism, chauvinism and casus bellis". In this direction, "social movements and "peoples' diplomacy" can play a very important role".*

Concerning the Cyprus problem, the two delegations stated: *"we will take new initiatives to promote cooperation among the peace forces of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. For the solution of the Cyprus problem within the UN framework and on the basis of its resolutions and through new efforts to bring the Greek –Cypriot and Turkish–Cypriot communities closer and promote a culture of co-existence between them".*

ODP and SYRIZA also stressed their commitment to a *"multi-dimensional concept of security based on disarmament, cooperation, democracy, human rights, human development and ecological protection".*

"On this basis – the declaration went on – we aim to further develop our joint campaign for the mutual reduction of arms and military budgets of Greece and Turkey as a substantial step towards real peace, mutual confidence and good neighborly relations between the two



Starting from the left: Ufuk Uras, *President of ODP*, Alecios Alavanos, *SYRIZA Parliamentary Group Chairman*, Akin Birdal, *MP for DTP*, Panos Trigazis, *SYNASPISMOS CPC* and Yiannis Banias, *MP for SYRIZA*.

countries. The adoption of this proposal will free huge resources for the economic, social and ecological development of both countries.

We cannot reconcile ourselves with the stark reality that the military budgets of Greece and Turkey as a percentage of the GDP are more than double that of the European and NATO averages and that our two countries are among the first countries in the world in arms imports, wasting huge resources while social and economic problems become more acute".

Struggle against war

Referring to the international situation, the ODP – SYRIZA statement emphasized the task to struggle against war: *"The two delegations consider that the struggle against war, militarism, racism and neo-liberalism requires common and coordinated action of the left, democratic and peace forces at regional, European and global levels. The so-called "war on terror" has already pushed the world military spending above the cold war levels and has led to wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and elsewhere. Europe itself is threatened by the "anti-missile shield", which may lead to a new cold war."*

Youth of Synaspismos: 1st solidarity mission to Cuba

A delegation of 22 members of the Youth of SYN, headed by **Kostas Zachariadis** (Responsible of International Relations of the Youth) and **Yiannis Bournous** (Responsible of the Department of European Policy of SYN) traveled to Cuba, from 13-21 May, in a mission realized in co-operation with UJC (the Union of Young Communists of Cuba) and the Cuban Embassy in Athens.

The delegation met with representatives of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party and the Communist Youth and had the opportunity to exchange experiences with various actors of social and educational programs in Havana (social workers, public computer centers, art schools, universities, schools for disabled children etc). The Youth of SYN supports the international campaigns against the US embargo and the imprisonment of the 5 Cuban heroes and agreed with the UJC to strengthen their cooperation and exchange.

European Left mission to Israel and Palestine

A European Left party delegation, consisting of 11 National Parliaments members from the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Greece visited Israel and Palestine from 23 to 28 of April 2008 on the invitation of the Communist Party of Israel. **Nicos Tsoukalis**, SYRIZA MP, joined the delegation.

During its visit the EL delegation met with the Secretary General of the CP of Israel **Mohammed Naffa** and other party officials, but also with peace organizations.

The programme included a visit to Ramallah and meetings with Palestinian left parties as well as participation to non-violent activities against the "Wall of shame".

The discussions focused on the multiform Middle East crisis and the struggle for peace in the region.

Once again it was stressed that the key-issue is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which must be solved on the basis of the UN resolutions, which provide for the end of the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. ■

AKEL hosts XXXIII NELF Session in Larnaca

The 33rd Session of the New European Left Forum will take place in Larnaca, 13 – 14 June, hosted by AKEL.

The first item on the agenda, on Friday morning, is "**60 years history and the current situation in Palestine**". A representative of the Palestinian Peoples Party and MEP Kyriakos Triandaphyllides will deliver the opening speeches. After a short presentation of the latest information on the Cyprus Problem there will be a session on "**International Law and secessionist actions. International legal and political consequences from the recognition of Kosovo**" with an introductory speech by Toumazos Tsielepis of the CC of AKEL. The afternoon sessions are dedicated to gender issues with the following specific topics: - "**The role of the UN Institutions in the promotion of gender equality**" and - "**The effectiveness of European legislation on Gender Equality**".

On Saturday, 14 June 2008, the morning session is dedicated to **Immigration issues on several levels**, from the global – Immigration in the age of globalization. The left approach - to the European - Immigration Policy of the European Union - to the national – "**Foreign workers' rights in Cyprus**" and "**Immigration policy of the EU. The case of Cyprus**".

In the afternoon the member parties will have time to present important developments in their respective countries, discuss the follow up of the meeting's debates and make arrangements for the next NELF session. ■

ALEXIS TSIPRAS - LOTHAR BISKY MEET IN BERLIN

Alexis Tsipras, the new President of SYNASPISMOS, in his first official trip abroad visited Berlin on April 10 2008, on the invitation of Lothar Bisky, President of the European Left Party and co-President of DIE LINKE.

The two leaders met in the Die Linke headquarters and exchanged views on a broad range of issues concerning the developments in Europe and the tasks of the European Left, taking into consideration the required preparations for the June 2009 European Parliament elections.

They also ascertained the close cooperation of Die Linke and Synaspismos on a bilateral level. EL Executive Board and Secretariat member Stelios Pappas participated in the meeting.

Alexis Tsipras also visited the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation where he spoke about the policy of SYNASPISMOS, domestic and international, to members of the Foundation and Die Linke and SYN members in Berlin. ■

PROFILE OF SYNASPISMOS

SYNASPISMOS is a new left party, which was founded in June 1992. Its name "Synaspismos" (Coalition of the Left and Progress) has been retained from its previous structure, which was a coalition of left and progressive parties and groups that was formed in 1989. The transformation was decided in 1991 after the CP of Greece (KKE) split from the Coalition. The name of the party was amended on 1 June 2003 and since that date SYNASPISMOS is the "Coalition of the Left of Movements and Ecology".

Synaspismos identifies itself with the ideas and values of democratic socialism, ecology, feminism and anti-militarism. It believes in pluralism and considers the defense of human rights non-negotiable.

The Party's regular Congress is held every three years, electing a Central Political Committee (CPC). The Congress elects the Party President and the CPC elects a Political Secretariat. On major issues the party members decide directly (e.g. the lists for

national and European elections are composed through secret ballot among the members).

The Party is closely related with the Youth League of Synaspismos

At the 5th SYNASPISMOS Congress, **Alexis Tsipras**, head of "**Anoithi Poli**" – the SYRIZA ballot for the Athens Municipality – was elected new Party President. **Alecos Alavanos**, did not wish to stand for re-election and remained Chairman of the SYRIZA Parliamentary Group (*see below*).

Parliamentary representation

Since its foundation, SYN has contested 5 national and 3 European parliament elections. In October 1993, it failed to win representation in the National Parliament by 0.06% (the barrier was 3% and it got 2.94% and 203,000 votes). But in the European Parliament elections of June 1994 the party won 6.3% (408,000 votes) and elected 2 members to the European Parliament (Greece had 25 MEPs). In the 2000 elections SYN lost ground (3,2% and 6MPs). In 2004 the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA) was

established by SYNASPISMOS and other left groups and contested the elections, getting 3,27% and 6MPs.

As for the European Parliament elections of June 2004 SYNASPISMOS stood its own candidates winning 4.16% and electing 1 MEP, cde Dimitris Papadimoulis.

The September 2007 national elections were also fought with SYRIZA, much more successfully this time, winning 5,04% and electing 14 MPs ten of whom are SYNASPISMOS party members.

Strong presence in Local Government

According to the October 2006 Prefectural and Municipal elections SYN is the third party in terms of representation in local government.

In addition, Synaspismos has a strong presence in the social field as well. It has high-level representation in all major trade unions and social movements - women and feminist organizations, peace, environmental, antiracist, human rights movements.