

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5157>



Interview

"There are more reasons to be anti-capitalist today than there were yesterday"

- Features -

Publication date: Thursday 5 October 2017

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

This interview was the third of a summer series, conducted by Lenny Benbara, Léo Rosell and Vincent Dain for the French site *Le Vent Se Lève* (www.lvsl.fr). Jaime Pastor is a professor of political science (who supervised the thesis of Pablo Iglesias) and a historic intellectual of the Trotskyist movement in Spanish state. He is a member of Izquierda Anticapitalista, a Trotskyist current that is part of Podemos. On the programme: the history of the Spanish Trotskyist movement; the regime crisis in Spanish state; the idea of plurinationality and Catalonia; relations with the NPA, and the strategy of Podemos with regard to the constraints of Europe.

LVSL: You were one of the main figures of the Spanish Revolutionary Communist League: how and in what context was the League formed in Spanish state? In France, May 1968 was of crucial importance in the construction of the LCR: was this also the case in Spanish state?

I was part of the generation of the second half of the sixties, and despite the context of dictatorship, May 1968 had a significant impact on a certain part of this generation. It was after 1968 that various heterodox currents emerged among the Spanish left. In our case, we were already intellectually influenced by authors like Ernest Mandel or even Andre Gorz, although he was not a Trotskyist. We came from the People's Liberation Front (FLP), an organization that had links with the Unified Socialist Party (PSU) of Michel Rocard; but after 1968 we turned to a more intellectual left, and the practices of the French JCR seemed more interesting to us, although we also read Althusser - that is, if there was an appetite for reading. We were part of an organization that did not belong to the other dogmatic Trotskyist groups, but we were not Maoists either. The international dimension seemed very important to us. That is still true today, but at the time it occupied a considerable place. As concerns myself, I went into exile in France in January 1969, I lived in Paris, and I made a political choice towards the end of April of the same year.

LVSL: It seems that there has always been a parallel evolution of the French and Spanish Trotskyist left. The LCR was formed in France shortly before the creation of its Spanish counterpart. In 2008, you created Izquierda Anticapitalista shortly before the formation of the NPA in France.

Yes, at that time, in the years 1960-1970, we even talked about "Marxism-mimicry." But in Spanish state we had a less solid social base than in France, and the fight against dictatorship was a priority. Nevertheless, unlike the Maoist organizations, we began to introduce counter-cultural themes: mainly feminism, and the ecology that was emerging at that time, even though it was less important. This allowed us to be part of the first feminist organizations that were formed in Spanish state in the early 1970s. It is necessary to recall that the context was that of the Transition to democracy, in which we demanded for our part a real transition to socialism. We were obviously involved in the debates that agitated the Spanish left at that time around Eurocommunism. We welcomed the criticism of the Soviet Union carried out by Santiago Carrillo (former general secretary of the PCE), but we disagreed with his idea of historic compromise and national reconciliation. At least there was an important strategic debate. We also felt represented by the current of the New Left Review, because Perry Anderson, although not a Trotskyist, held positions closer to Mandelite Trotskyism than to any other current.

LVSL: In the 1990s, you created, along with several other former members of the LCR, the *Espacio Alternativo*, which joined Izquierda Unida while maintaining a critical line towards its organization and strategy. What did you learn from that period? What is your assessment of your experience within IU and how did you come to the decision to leave?

We were initially about 100 former LCR members to join IU, and they generously invited us to participate in the leading bodies, which allowed us to have some visibility. We thought this was the best course of action because we felt there was no political space to the left of IU at that time. The coalition guaranteed a political-electoral presence and at that time showed a desire to create links with the social movements, for example when it was necessary to defend the 35 hours with the CGT and other collectives. It was on the basis of this link with the social movements that we set up a current called Espacio Alternativo, with activists who came from eco-socialism: our identity was therefore red, green, violet for feminism and plurinational. Because we defended a plurinational federalism and a model of confederal organization for Spanish state.

From 2000, and even before, there was a regression within IU: the PCE opted more for a patriotic discourse, then installed a real bureaucratic lockdown, before finally drifting towards an alignment on the PSOE and the policy of José Luis Zapatero. At the same time, the global justice movement emerged between the end of the 1990s and 2004, which enabled us, who were of a certain age, to create a connection with the new generation. Those who are today at the head of Anticapitalistas come from this new generation marked by alter-globalization: Miguel Urbán, Raúl Camargo, Teresa Rodríguez and Jesús Rodríguez in Andalusia, and Josep Maria Antentas in Catalonia.

We decided to leave Izquierda Unida in 2008. At the time, I had doubts, because our work within IU was exhausted, but from my point of view there was still no political space to occupy to the left of IU. However, the economic crisis erupted, your President Sarkozy called in a famous speech to "refound capitalism", while there emerged in France the idea of creating a new anti-capitalist party. These elements led us - with a certain amount of mimicry towards the NPA - to create Izquierda Anticapitalista at the end of 2008 and then to stand in the European elections of 2009. Things obviously did not go as well as they did for Podemos, but a number of people voted for our candidacy. We aroused the sympathy of militant social activists and we could count on some well-known figures, like Ester Vivas. However, from an electoral point of view, we were not able to benefit from the springboard of the media: we were an organization that was unknown to 99 per cent of society.

LVSL: How did Izquierda Anticapitalista make the decision to participate in the creation of the Podemos hypothesis?

The experience of 15-M (the indignados movement) enabled people to unite again and represented a new wave of social activism led by militants involved in the process of socialization. The cycle of demonstrations was gradually exhausted from the first months of 2013, in the sense that the momentum diminished, but not the spirit of the 15-M itself or the motivation of its heirs. For example, Arcadi Oliveras and the celebrated nun Teresa Forcades created Procés Constituent in April 2013, a social movement which then became part of the coalition that won the Barcelona City Hall in 2015. This is significant since it shows the links that were maintained with a whole sector of Catholic origin that has always had influence in this country. Subsequently, anti-capitalist militants set up the platform Alternativas desde Abajo in 2013.

Then came the summer university of Izquierda Anticapitalista, still in 2013, which was a decisive step in the construction of the Podemos hypothesis. This summer school gave rise to an open debate on the way forward to build the alternative, which included Pablo Iglesias, Juan Carlos Monedero and Alberto Garzón. During these debates, Pablo Iglesias said, I still remember: "Why not convince Ada Colau (the current mayor of Barcelona) to be a candidate?" But finally, it was he who found himself at centre stage. The initiators of Podemos regarded the 2014 European elections as a great opportunity, since they were the elections with the least incentive to "vote usefully" and because Alternativas desde abajo was turning more towards municipal elections, so it was necessary to take advantage of them.

Pablo Iglesias, Miguel Urbán and several other activists had an agreement to launch the Podemos initiative. We were quickly involved in writing the manifesto, and this is where the first tensions arose: on the points to be evoked and

those which should rather be avoided and then on the question of the programme. Our debates were particularly fuelled by Latin American experiences. We had to choose between a politico-electoral response on the line of Ernesto Laclau, or a more "horizontal-community" response, as advocated by authors such as Raquel Gutiérrez in Bolivia and Raul Zibechi in Uruguay.

We were faced with these two alternatives, but we were more inclined towards an intermediate formula, towards the necessity of a populist hypothesis in a sense closer to Antonio Gramsci than to Ernesto Laclau: that is to say towards idea of building a national-popular bloc. This was all the more so in the light of the weak points of Laclau's theory, which was only oriented towards the electoral objective, based on a model centred on a charismatic leadership, rather than on the construction of social movements.

Taking into account the above points, Pablo Iglesias seemed to us well placed to assume this role. He has given us all a lesson in political communication, by his ability to articulate a plurality of demands through floating signifiers. In this sense, we positively welcomed the choice of talking about people faced with a caste, even though we as anti-capitalists prefer to talk about democracy in the face of oligarchy - the two formulas are not incompatible.

LVSL: The anti-capitalist current of Podemos is regularly critical of the current leadership led by Pablo Iglesias. When did the first discrepancies appear?

When we began to discuss the principal axes, nobody wanted to admit the centrality of the Catalan question. In our view, it was clear that fracture people against the oligarchy was a priority, but it was important not to forget to include other lines of fracture in the political agenda. Because we find ourselves in Spanish state facing a socio-political crisis, certain features of which are not observable in Latin America or France. This is the case with the national question, and here we have a great difference of approach with Pablo Iglesias about the use of the signifier "motherland".

Because it is obvious that this term makes sense from Madrid - but that is far from being the case in Catalonia or in the Basque Country. We need to speak to each other in terms of different nations and equality between these nations. As far as we are concerned, we do of course speak of a Spanish nation, but there is also a Catalan nation and a Basque nation, and it is in this sense that it is important to put forward the idea of plurinationality. In the early stages of Podemos, this was an element that was lacking in the discourse.

At first, we recognized the success of Podemos in the European elections, but gradually we moved away from the leading group from the moment they made European success a way of legitimizing their project, especially during the first congress of the party in the autumn of 2014. Their model was that of a party that was clearly focused on leadership centred on the media, to the detriment of the local circles that had been fundamental to the European campaign and which we needed in the lightning war that we had to conduct. What they wanted to do was, I quote, to build an "electoral war machine".

Obviously, the general elections of December 2015 were on the horizon, so the political-electoral terrain was a priority. But mediation could not be done only through television or social networks: it had to go through work in the neighbourhoods, sinking roots in the localities. Some circles, which were not given a proper role, other than a few isolated actions such as flyposting, soon became weakened and emptied of their substance. Today the average age in these circles is quite high, which is not representative of the electorate of Podemos, and this is a real problem. On the other hand, it shows that Podemos has motivated activists over 50, although the percentage of votes obtained in this category of the population is very low. This means that part of this generation has, in one way or another, regained hope with Podemos.

LVSL: Indeed, Podemos has given hope to a section of the generation of the transition to democracy, whose aspirations have been frustrated by what you call an "asymmetrical transition". In Podemos, you regularly mention the "crisis of the regime of 1978" a conceptual prism that is interesting and unknown in France. What do you mean?

As far as we are concerned, let us say that from 2008, and especially from the turn of Zapatero to the policy of rigour, and then from the censorship of Catalonia's statute of autonomy by the Constitutional Court, we observe a break in the implicit social pact which had been formed during the Transition. It had already weakened before, especially under Felipe González, pioneer of neoliberalism in Spanish state. But aspirations were fundamentally upset under Zapatero, when the hopes of social ascension of middle-class children were shattered by the crisis and the policies of austerity. This social fracture is coupled with the crisis of representativeness of the major parties, the PSOE and the PP. Many people are beginning to question the story of the Transition as a model of democracy - although Pablo (Iglesias) is today much less critical of the Transition than he was at the beginning - and especially of its idealist side: an untouchable monarchy, the indispensable unity of Spanish state, the prohibition on speaking of those who disappeared under the dictatorship, on seeking justice, truth and reparation for the victims of Francoism. Finally, the Catalan question became more acute with the censure of Catalonia's new statute of autonomy by the Constitutional Court in 2010, which caused a real divide: Catalanism up until then was mainly federalist, but today, finally, it is taking note that the federal route is no longer an option within the Spanish State because of institutional blockages. This has caused a major shift in the population towards independence. Obviously, the monarchy is affected to its core, since it symbolizes the spirit of the Transition and the unity of Spanish state.

We are therefore not faced with a crisis of the state - with the possible exception of the Catalan question - but it is no longer merely a crisis of representation. There is indeed a regime crisis that is far from being resolved, despite the exhaustion of the cycle of mobilization caused by 15-M and the fact that Podemos has reached an electoral ceiling. Today, corruption continues to weaken the legitimacy of the regime, including in non-left-wing sectors of the population - which in part explains the importance of Ciudadanos. This is why we can say that we are in a period of interregnum, an intermediate moment in which political instability persists.

Nevertheless, it is a crisis of the regime and not just a crisis of governability, and it seems to me that a horizon of rupture remains open. Even if, in the short term, of course, we do not see a new wave of mobilization emerge, if there is not a renewed hope in the ranks of Podemos, we could end up with a blockage. Still, the PSOE primaries have demonstrated the impact of Podemos and revealed how real is the crisis of the regime. In this sense, we welcome the victory of Pedro Sánchez as a victory of the Socialist militants who sought to curb the rightward turn of the party. Objectively speaking, we have seen a weakening of one of the two key parties of the regime, although the PSOE now poses problems to Podemos in terms of electoral competition. Today, we run the risk that the PSOE will become an instrument for the self-reform of the regime, for a simple regeneration of it, while exerting pressure for Podemos to become a subordinate force.

LVSL: Pedro Sánchez has recently reappropriated the concept of plurinationality, but he seems more inclined to recognize the plurality of cultural identities than to evoke the thorny issue of sovereignty. In the same way as Canada with the Québécois. What do you think?

Pedro Sánchez has taken up the concept of plurinationality, which Pablo Iglesias had put on the political agenda in a rather confused way. But he takes it up in an exclusively cultural approach: that is, the only political nation, the only sovereign nation is the Spanish nation, and Catalonia is a cultural nation. A conception with which a large part of Catalan society is not satisfied. Today, many Catalans would like to see the statute of autonomy rejected by the Constitutional Court applied, but they come up against the inflexibility of the People's Party. The problem is that the idea of Spanish state as the only nation is deeply rooted in society and in the imaginary vision of the regime of 1978. Today we must defend the right to self-determination, even if this right to self-determination inevitably includes the right to separation, otherwise it would make no sense. We defend a federalism that is also found in the political

culture of Izquierda Unida, which is also what Alberto Garzón advocates.

LVSL: Javier Franzé clearly highlighted the existence of two lines within Podemos as to how to solve the crisis of the regime of 1978, two lines that materialize in a tension between regeneration and rupture: must we content ourselves with "kicking out" the People's Party from the institutions in order to put them at the service of the citizens, or should we break openly with the regime of 1978 and its institutions by initiating a constituent process?

After the general elections of June 2016, it began to be recognized that the populist moment and the opportunity to be perceived as an alternative to the government had passed. In fact, Podemos knew very well that even if we had surpassed the PSOE, the economic powers, the IBEX35, which is the equivalent of your CAC40 in France, would have done everything possible to prevent them from governing. But the "sorpasso" would at least have allowed Podemos to appear as the main alternative force.

In the Spanish case, the populist project was intended to be much more transversal than the conception of Laclau and Mouffe. Chantal Mouffe talks about left-wing populism, while Inigo Errejón talks about populism in general. But the transversality was limited by the irruption of Ciudadanos. Since Podemos has not succeeded in putting the PSOE in a minority, populism must henceforth present itself as an alternative of government.

In the context of the exhaustion of the wave of social mobilization, to present itself as an alternative of government implies restricting itself to a project of a regeneration type. This entails the risk of seeking an agreement with the PSOE that would be limited to a constitutional reform, to a moderate form of austerity. In this sense, we would follow the Portuguese model. But given that the PSOE is not ready to break with the European fiscal pact, there is a real risk of apprehending the problem from the point of view of the crisis of governability alone and proposing a minimum reform that would not resolve any of the fundamental aspects of the crisis of the regime, neither in the social sphere nor in terms of the national question.

In the face of this, among the anti-capitalists, we consider that Podemos must prioritize the work of opposition to the government by continuing to put pressure on the PSOE, so as to lead to an alternative motion of censure. There is no reason to underestimate parliamentary action, and we must continue to harass the PP and show that there is another option. However, on the other hand, we believe that the Catalan challenge must be met.

LVSL: What about your position on the Catalan referendum?

Obviously, our comrades in Catalonia and I consider that the referendum as it stands is not the best way, because it is the result of the compromises between the CUP and Junts Pel Sí-, including a powerful pro-independence party of the right, the PdeCat, marked by being very guilty of corruption. In any case, if the referendum took place, it would be a real blow to the regime, even if the "No" prevailed, because millions of people could express themselves in a participatory process. If the referendum is not authorized and is constantly interfered with by the PP, only supporters of the "Yes" will go to the polls.

In this particular case, it seems to me that the leaders of Podemos remain rather ambiguous. The problem is that they were politically socialized in the culture of the Communist Party - this is not the case with Inigo Errejón, but it is with Pablo Iglesias and Juan Carlos Monedero, who advised Izquierda Unida when Gaspar Llamazares was the general coordinator. This political culture prompts them to approach Catalonia in cultural rather than political terms, and this is the heart of the problem. Within the anti-capitalist current, our position on Iberian nationalities is not the subject of internal dispute because we have familiarized ourselves with these issues for a long time.

The remodeling of Podemos in the general elections of December 2015 was largely due to the agreement reached by Pablo Iglesias with En Común Podem and to the turn taken by Pablo Iglesias and Iñigo Errejón following the failure of the regional elections of September 2015 in Catalonia: they began to speak of plurinationality. Previously, this word appeared only in small letters in the documents of Vistalegre, but it did not fit in with the discourse on the motherland. Now they speak of a "plurinational motherland", despite all the contradictions that this implies.

LVSL: So you are demanding the implementation of a constituent process, that is, a break with the regime of 1978 rather than a regeneration of it?

Obviously, in the current political situation, we are not in a position to say that we must engage in a constitutive rupture. On the other hand, we can very well denounce the "de-constitutive" process being carried out at this very moment by the government in power. In these circumstances, we can ensure that the town halls elected to change things are laboratories for alternative ideas - we agree on this point with Iñigo Errejón. These practices would prefigure the constituent process – with capital letters – that we want to start.

The problem is that Iñigo Errejón ends up with a discourse whereby the institutions are intrinsically good but are parasitized by intruders. Unfortunately, the institutions are far from being good in themselves, and the leaders of Podemos are well aware of this. Moreover, it is necessary to be aware of the risks arising from the material conditions of the European Union and of Spanish state, by all this constitutional architecture which hampers any possibility of creating more public employment and remunicipalizing public services. Legislation and the characteristics of public administrations and their officials often constitute obstacles to the policies of the town halls who try to implement change. They are in need of counter-powers, something which Gerardo Pisarello and Ada Colau in Barcelona are perfectly aware of: they know that they should do more and demand more social pressure on themselves to be able to go beyond their limits.

The town halls aiming at change are fundamental, but they must be perceived as a field of political conflict, far from being neutral. A field in which the actors of change know that they are part of a state apparatus whose institutional architecture is not theirs, within which they have the task of generating new relationships of power. These power relations will have to be implemented at regional level in the regional elections of 2019. At the moment, Podemos does not govern any autonomous community (region), and this would be a crucial step forward.

Today it is possible to think that the war of movement is over and that we are entering into a war of position which should make it possible to advance the idea of a constituent process on a large scale. Starting at the local level, with the remunicipalization of public services, with new social rights, with creating a federation of municipalities. On the issue of debt, it is essential that municipalities work together on a Spanish and European scale. We believe that we must not abandon the horizon of the rupture, which must remain our strategic horizon: tactics must then be subordinated to this strategy.

LVSL: The militants of Podemos are divided on the republican question. Some believe that the Republic must be at the heart of the constituent process, while others, on a more transversal line, consider that the emphasis should be on expanding democracy and leaving aside this key issue. Some anti-capitalist militants believe that the Republic is not the panacea and should not replace the horizon of a real popular power, sometimes inspired by the experience of Salvador Allende's Chile and the cordones industriales. What do you think?

Obviously, we know that the monarchy is a central pillar of the 1978 regime, but we distinguish between what is criticism and what is political strategy. At the strategic level, it is true that in the majority of Spanish society, the monarchy/republic issue still does not appear to be a central issue on the political agenda. On the other hand, the themes of health, education, labour, universal income and the Catalan question are considered fundamental.

Like Pablo (Iglesias), we are now promoting republican values, the idea of a civic republicanism, defending political participation and opening the possibility of a referendum on the question of monarchy or republic. This is not incompatible with the idea of a popular power. But we cannot reproduce the Chilean model without the centrality of the industrial proletariat in Chile at the time. When we speak of popular power, we call for self-organization, social movements and the reconstruction of a new social unionism. In the latest issue of the magazine *Viento Sur*, we deal with "struggles, movements and counter-powers". The question is how strategically to develop a social counter-power based on collective movements and mobilizations. We regularly cite as examples the Andalusian Workers' Union (SAT) and the Mortgage Victims' Platform (PAH), which has played a crucial role in the wave of mobilization in recent years. We scrutinize all the new organizations taking shape among very precarious workers, who until then had remained ultra-fragmented.

LVSL: In France, the strategy of the NPA differs from yours. You have chosen to take part in the Podemos platform despite all the disagreements that you maintain with the current leaders of the party, while the French anti-capitalist militants do follow in a certain way their own separate path. How do you explain these differences between the Spanish and French anti-capitalist families?

I believe that we must go back to the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution in order to grasp the French situation: by way of assessment, one could say that the way things were handled in the post-referendum period, following the victory of the "no", represented a missed opportunity. The left forces could have capitalized on this "no" and engendered an alternative, plural political force, which was not a simple coalition of parties but a genuine party-movement. Subsequently, the Left Front/NPA alliance did not occur, which led to the weakening of the NPA in the first instance, then to that of the Left Front. In fact, I think that what was missing in France was a 15-M. What was missing was a decisive moment like the movement of the indignados, which could have constituted an entry into the struggle and an experience of intense politicization for the new generation. This movement would have forced the parties of the left to self-reform, to converge and to give way to this new generation.

We certainly witnessed a cycle of social struggles, with the mobilization against pension reform, against the labour law, with *Nuit Debout*, but it would seem that this was not enough. It can be said that France *Insoumise* has somewhat captured the discontent and the anger felt by many French people, but without any real social baggage. There is no guarantee that France *Insoumise* will become the catalyst for a new round of mobilization tomorrow.

Olivier Besancenot and the NPA have differences with Jean-Luc Mélenchon - and I must say that if I were in their place I would be as critical as they are - but they must recognize that he has managed to channel this discontent and that he managed, in part, to counterbalance Marine Le Pen in a whole part of the popular classes. I think that the principal criticisms of the NPA are related to symbolic issues, to the question of national populism, and especially to the mode of organization.

LVSL: You are very critical of Podemos on this last aspect...

As for us, it is true that we did not split and despite the conflicts we had, we accepted being a minority within Podemos. But we are a critical and irreducible minority. We do not conduct entrism or act like parasites: on the contrary, we have been present since the origins of the organization, we are the co-founders. And despite the disputes that quickly arose, we still think it is relevant to stay in Podemos, although we are not optimistic about its future as a party, because we perceive great risks of institutionalization and bureaucratization. Today, we believe that we must give more importance to the work of rebuilding the social movement, that is to say that our militants and supporters must become more integrated with movements and networks. Podemos must not be content to observe the actions of social collectives and platforms, we must contribute to the reconstruction of these organizations.

LVSL: This is precisely the point stressed by the Latin American activist and sociologist Raquel Gutiérrez,

who warns against the risks for activists to participate in institutions in a context of ebbing social mobilizations. Is not a divide between the party and the social movements in such a situation inevitable?

That is the risk we run. We are more Gramscians than Leninists. Our project must be that of a plurinational and popular historical bloc, and this bloc must have a fundamental institutional arm. Because the big problem of the radical left is that we never succeed in getting more than 10 per cent, or even 5 per cent. The window of opportunity opened by the crisis is immense. But this institutional arm cannot function without what Raquel (Gutiérrez) calls a national, popular and community-based national horizon. We must build bridges between the two, combine them and articulate them with the cultural, discursive and communicative dispositive that is fundamental to Podemos. We recognize the performative capacity of discourse, but without a material basis, communication has its limitations. We saw that with Pablo Iglesias, who benefited from a very large space in the media for a while, before they began to give him a hard time and to become hostile. We can also remark a certain exhaustion on the social networks: programmes like La Tuerka and Fort Apache no longer have the same audience as before.

LVSL: In her thesis on the Revolutionary Communist League, which became the NPA, Florence Joshua is interested in the way in which activists are politically self-defined. She highlights in particular among the young generations of militants a great heterogeneity of the political affiliations that they lay claim to. It seems that unlike the militants of the 1968 moment, the young activists of the global justice moment no longer make the "revolution" a central identity marker. What do you think is revolutionary in Podemos in the 21st century?

Personally, I don't use the term "revolutionary" very much. From the rise of the global justice movement, we focused our discourse more on anti-capitalism, which coincided with the orientation adopted in France. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the revolution is no longer part of the plans, which is why our friend Daniel Bensaïd acknowledged that we are entering an epoch of "strategic eclipse". In the 1990s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, we conceived of ourselves essentially as militants in resistance. In a certain fashion, we moved from resistance to anti-capitalism through the social justice movement and even more so when the crisis of 2008 broke out. In this sense, I do not feel the need to define myself as revolutionary, even though I think that today, because of the crisis, the strategic debate is back on the table, although the revolution is no longer on the agenda.

Today, our question is: what strategy should we adopt to put the need for revolution on the agenda? Issue 150 of the magazine Viento Sur is about the centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917, and we are asking ourselves questions about ways of rethinking revolution. Rethinking it so as not to forget it, but without falling into nostalgia. May this centenary serve to remember the revolution, while knowing that it is not a question for today. The strategic debate is for today, which is why it is essential to re-read Gramsci and debate him, because today we are at a stage of the war of position. The war of movement is over: it took the form of a lightning war in the electoral cycle of the past two years, but it has come to an end.

The most important thing for me is that there are today more reasons to be anti-capitalist than there were yesterday, because of climate change, and it has now been demonstrated that the welfare state constituted a parenthesis in the history of capitalism much more than a cultural feature of it. The social pact is not a cultural trait of capitalism, it is an exception related to the particular configuration of power relations in the post-war period. Today, capitalism threatens the future of humanity, and that is why we quote repeatedly Fredric Jameson: "It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" even though I would rather talk about the end of humanity, because the planet can very well survive without us human beings.

In any case, it is interesting to note that with the revival of this strategic debate there is emerging a certain intellectual curiosity towards the authors of the 1970s who reinterpreted the thought of Trotsky, such as Daniel Bensaïd or Perry Anderson. My generation dedicated itself to reading Lenin and Trotsky directly. Today the younger generation

can rediscover these classical authors through the eyes of thinkers of the 1970s, while analyzing the present historical moment by their by their criteria and their own choice of reading.

LVSL: Did the painful experience of Syriza in Greece not discourage the militants and intellectuals in Podemos?

This question is fundamental, because strategically, we have to determine what to do within the framework of the current European Union. We had our differences on this subject with Pablo Iglesias and Iñigo Errejón, because they initially defended what Tsipras eventually accepted in Greece. For us, that was a mistake. It is not a question of using stinging terms like "capitulation" or "treason," but in any case, it was a defeat. Because a referendum that results in the rejection of the memorandum, but after which the memorandum is finally signed, is nevertheless a clear proof of failure. This has had important repercussions. The situation is not comparable to that of Chile in 1973, but it is true that this defeat served as an alibi for sectors of European Social-Democracy, new parties, and even in a certain fashion Pablo Iglesias, to assert that it is not possible to oppose the Troika and that it is necessary to revise the programme downwards.

We can certainly imagine that at the moment, but when we are forced to privatize Bankia in Spanish state, we must say no. With Miguel Urbán, we were interested in the proposals of Yanis Varoufakis, although we did not focus on that. At least we have recognized the need for a plan B for Europe. Personally, I did not agree with Varoufakis' idea of a European Constituent Assembly, because it had little meaning, but it is true that it had the merit of putting the spotlight on the question of the debt. With Eric Toussaint and the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt, we have tried to propose initiatives at European level and particularly at the level of the countries of the South: a strategy could be envisaged between Portugal, Spanish state, Italy and Greece, not in order to exit the euro but to disobey the European fiscal pact and the limits imposed by the European Union. It is quite possible that this strategy of disobedience would come up against the Eurogroup at some point. Consequently, the risks of an exit from the euro must be accepted, but always subject to a strategy aimed at guaranteeing social rights in the constitution, re-nationalizing what has been privatized and seeking the citizens' consensus necessary to demystify the European Union.

Obviously, it is necessary to seek allies, because it is difficult to maintain a balance of power only on the level of the Spanish state. A minimal alliance between Portugal and Spanish state could be a first step. We cannot rely on a strategy of resignation and a static vision, nor give in to the temptation of withdrawing on to the national level, but we must imagine a strategy of extension. We should think about a social protectionism that could be applied at the national level, but with the aim of extending it beyond that.

August 21, 2017.

*Translated from [« Il y a davantage de raisons d'Être anticapitaliste qu'hier Ê »](#) by **International Viewpoint**.*

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning.