Free Pablo Hasel!

We are reproducing this article from the Republican Socialists blog.

The Republican Socialist Platform condemns in the strongest possible terms the imprisonment of Catalan rapper Pablo Hasél.

Pablo was convicted and now imprisoned in connection with tweets and songs taking aim at the Spanish establishment, including the disgraced former king Juan Carlos I, who has been implicated in extensive corruption in recent years. Far from being an exceptional case, this outrageous use of the law to suppress and criminalise political dissent is consistent with the Spanish state's typical response to democratic and socialist challenges from below.

Article 578, one of the laws which Pablo supposedly violated, ostensibly criminalises the "glorification of terrorism" but is widely understood to instead criminalise political speech, songs, art and satire. It is regularly weaponised against the left but rarely against the ascendant Spanish far-right.

The Spanish state's authoritarian impulses have been displayed perhaps most clearly in recent years in Catalonia. Since the independence referendum in October 2017, Catalans have been forced to contend with police violence and political trials, including the unjust imprisonment of political and civil society leaders. The independence movement in Scotland has often extended support and solidarity to the Catalan movement and we reaffirm that internationalist position today.

Since Pablo was taken by force from an occupation at the University of Lleida last week and jailed, mass street protests have taken place every single day in cities across the length and breadth of the Spanish state, from Barcelona and Madrid to Seville and A Coruña. Many of these protesters have been beaten, arrested and denounced in the Spanish press and by the far-right as vandals and hooligans.

As Pablo himself wrote on Friday from his jail cell: “You cannot put on the same level the violent repression of the state, with its police brutality, and the struggle of the protesters against that and so much more.” We salute the protesters’ courage in taking to the streets in defence of fundamental democratic rights and freedoms in full knowledge of how harsh the response was likely to be. The Scottish independence movement could learn a great deal from their tenacity.

As republicans, socialists and internationalists, we support the call for the immediate release of Pablo Hasél and all political prisoners in the Spanish state; for the dismantling of the anti-democratic laws used to suppress dissent; and for full respect for the right to self-determination.

Llibertat Pablo Hasél!

Free Pablo Hasél!

You can obtain Free Pablo Hasél stickers from the Republican Socialist Platform for distribution in Scotland in exchange for a small donation by contacting treasurer@republicansocialists.scot.

This statement is also accessible in Català, Español/Castellano and Galego.

Catalan elections closely

watched in Scotland

Catalonia goes to the polls on Sunday 14 February (14-F) in elections for the devolved parliament and government ("Generalitat"), The elections will be closely watched in Scotland, particularly by the independence movement looking to learn from the struggle. Glasgow Radical Independence Campaign and Dundee Radical Independence Campaign will shortly hold a joint public discussion meeting on the elections.

Below we republish an article by *Lorena Serantes*, first published on the site of the Scottish Republican Socialist Platform (RSP), analysing the political parties contesting the Catalan elections.

Catalan Fourth Internationalists in *Anticapitalistes* (part of the confederal Anticapitalistas organisation across the Spanish state) have also published a statement on the elections, available in Catalan here and in English here.

Anticapitalistes support the Catalan independence movement but warn of the need for a social response to neoliberal policies in Catalonia and the Spanish state, one that defends working class living standards and state services from cuts. In recent years sections of the radical left within both Catalonia and the Spanish state, including Podemos, the municipal movement around Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau, and the Republican Left (ERC) party that is aligned with the SNP in Scotland, have attached themselves to neo-liberal coalitions with social democrats and right wing nationalists. *Anticapitalistes* call for a break (or "rupture") from this.

They are not standing in the elections themselves, but give support to the candidates of the *CUP* ("Popular Unity Candidacies"), the pro-independence, anticapitalist, ecosocialist and feminist grouping contesting the elections

and described below. *CUP* currently have four seats in the Catalan Parliament and are looking to increase their influence.

Anticapitalistes also draw attention to the rise of the far right, openly fascist, Vox party winning seats in the new parliament for the first time.

Political party shifts ahead of the Catalan elections

RSP member *Lorena Serantes* explores ideological shifts within the Catalan political parties ahead of next week's crucial election.

Since the 1 October (1-O) independence referendum took place nearly four years ago, the political situation in Catalonia has gone through many relevant changes that can be vital for the next election and its wider context.

First, we need to understand the fundamentally imperialistic nature of the Spanish State, shown by the tactic of judicialisation of the whole Catalan independence process (especially their most recent move against Generalitat president Quim Torra). Secondly, the Catalan independence movement needs to be understood as a popular uprising for democracy and the right of self-determination within a strongly centralised state. We shouldn't refer to it as an electoral movement, nor as a civil disobedience tactic to change the nature of Spain into a federal republic. The Catalans have been able to respond to the inaction of pro-independence parties and groups (both on the right and left-wing spectrum) by strengthening the street-focused level of activity and putting pressure on the parties to advance on building the new Catalan state.

There’s a lot of work which analyses the Catalan process, the incarceration of the ANC and Òmnium leaders and the strategies of the Catalan politicians and the national government (I must clarify when I’m talking about “national” I mean the Catalan executive, as I deny the character of ‘nation’ to Spain, a state composed of nations and regions). My intention in this article, however, is to define and explain the political party shifts that will have an impact on the behaviour of the Catalan electorate. I will propose at first the main factors that accelerated these transformations within the parties and the party system. Following that, I will focus on developing the main topic of the article.

The main political formations from the pro-independence and the unionist blocs have increased the existing uncertainty around the issue of independence

Background

Before I begin, there are some points I need to make clear. My use of the term ‘political party shifting’ doesn’t strictly align with the concept as utilised by political scientists. In political science we refer to it as: (1) membership changes within political parties and (2) redefined voting patterns (i.e. when the electorate switches its traditional behaviour towards parties, giving way to realignments in the political system). In contrast, I will combine both conceptual definitions and add the ideological changes the Catalan parties have gone through during these last few years. Keeping this in mind, my intention is not to write a scientific article but one that helps to understand the situation of party politics in the northeastern nation.

Both Spanish general and regional elections (i.e. elections taking place in the autonomous communities) use the proportional representation method known as the D’Hondt formula, also used for the Scottish Parliament’s regional lists. Each constituency is presented with a closed list of

candidates from every party or coalition and elects a number of representatives in accordance with its population. Catalonia elects to its parliament 135 members from its four provinces (85 from Barcelona, 18 from Tarragona, 17 from Girona and 15 from Lleida). The threshold which parties need to reach to win representation is 3% of the vote.

Catalonia has changed since 2017 and the events following the 1st of October referendum. Attention has been drawn to the courts of justice, the incarceration of politicians and activists and the exile of the Catalan president Carles Puigdemont, but nobody has focused on explaining how the main political formations from the pro-independence and the unionist blocs have increased the existing uncertainty around the issue of independence.

I will not use the term "constitutionalist" or "constitutional" to define the parties that oppose independence because I don't think it's accurate and correct. A constitutionalist party is by definition a political formation that respects the constitution and legality of some territory. Spanish parties refer to themselves this way to take the powerful concept of "the law", which is incredible given how many times they have conveniently forgotten to follow it. Instead, they are profoundly unionist parties that agree on rejecting Catalan independence (or even more autonomy).

Changes

It's clear to me that there have been many factors producing changes in Catalan politics. I will therefore develop some of them.

In the pro-independence bloc – made up of the catch-all Junts per Catalunya (Together for Catalonia), the centre-left to left-wing Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia/ERC), and the far-left Candidatura d'Unitat

Popular (Popular Unity Candidacy/CUP) – the exile of Puigdemont (Junts) and other leaders from ERC and the CUP (Marta Rovira and Anna Gabriel) have pushed a renewal of leadership and new strategic plans for the future.

Leadership changes often produce positive effects (parties with a bad image can rise and recover) but also can create negative ones (voters attached to the candidate will no longer identify with the party if the new proposed faces don't represent a form of continuity). Fights to elect party leaders with a certain ideological background take place within the liberal and social democratic-oriented parties, which may result in party fragmentation or splits. Left-wing projects with a democratic structure have to decide their future too, but instead of promoting internal competition amongst different traditions, they might debate, discuss and respect all the options, establishing other ways and methods to elect a new leadership from their membership. I'm not an expert on structural changes within parties, however I understand how these can make a big impact on electoral performance.

Unionists

The unionist bloc is formed of the classic right-wing Partido Popular (People's Party/PP), the liberal right-wing Ciudadanos (Citizens/C's), the social democrat centre-right Partit Socialista de Catalunya (Socialists' Party of Catalonia/PSC) and the new extreme ultranationalist right-wing Vox. The Spanish nationalist nature of these formations has taken them to focus on the politics of the state rather than on Catalan issues, content to blame the independentist forces for the rise of extreme right groupings on the streets of Barcelona (and also other territories of Spain like Valencia) rather than address the societal problems that gave rise to them. It's important to clarify the PSC is not the same as PSOE in the other Spanish regions and nations, although they set up an agreement a long time ago to stand together in Catalan

elections. The Catalan PSOE branch disappeared in the 1970s, since then the PSC has become the electoralist brand of the social democrats in the northeast.

PP and PSOE, the major parties in Spain, agreed on attacking the Catalan independence movement the same way, which has distanced them from Catalan civil society. Looking at Spanish politics as a whole, they have preferred to appeal to the anti-Catalan middle and high class of Madrid and the South (Andalusia, Murcia, Extremadura). PSOE's tactic has been to feed the extreme right (specially on the PP/PSOE-controlled media) to divide the Spanish right-wing parties and make Vox the political scarecrow which can provide a reason to vote for the "left alternative" they propose. This obviously has opened a channel for Vox to promote hate speech and extremist ideologies which were previously hidden within the PP. C's (Citizens), a free-market liberal-oriented formation, has been trying to occupy each space left out by the two major parties, from the right to the moderate left, always with a nationalistic narrative that tries to exclude everyone that doesn't want to feel Spanish. Polarisation has settled in Catalonia because of the trajectory of Spanish nationalism.

Political parties in Catalonia have changed since 2017 from an ideological point of view and also in the electorate they want to appeal to

Therefore, we have two polarised blocs, one that leans to the centre-left civic nationalist tradition and another spanning the right-wing ultranationalist spectrum. But having said that, we cannot end our analysis with this simplistic explanation because political parties in Catalonia have changed from an ideological point of view and also in the electorate they want to appeal to. I will not analyse Podemos and the Comuns (Commons) coalition here, since they should be regarded as a distinct phenomenon and will require a separate article to comprehend their position, fragmentations and internal instability. First, I will analyse the pro-

independence bloc shifts, which are significant due to a fragmentation pattern in the traditional conservative nationalist groups.

Why an election

This election has been called not only because of the suspension of Quim Torra (again using the Spanish supposedly democratic law), but also due to the conflict between government partners Junts and Esquerra. Both of the parties had interest in holding the presidency, which caused a rupture of the coalition during the Catalan budget negotiations. As of today, Esquerra has 32 seats in Parliament, whilst Junts (Torra's party) has 20 representatives. With the break-up of the government coalition, it's obvious that talks of forming an electoral coalition like Junts pel Sí (2015-2017) won't occur, and both parties will run separately.

Junts is an alliance of little Catalan nationalist and Catalanist right-wing and centre-right liberal parties that emerged from the rupture of Convergencia i Unió (CiU) in 2014-15. CiU was formed in 1978 as a coalition of Convergencia Democrática de Catalunya (CDC), with Catalan nationalist ideas, and Uniò Democrática de Catalunya (UDC), a Catalanist non-independentist party. This alliance governed Catalonia for long periods of time (Jordi Pujol's executives) with a liberal program of deregulating basic public services and joining with Spanish nationalist parties at a state level, specially with the PP.

After the alliance was disbanded, UDC followed a long way of talks with the PSC, finally joining the social democratic party, arguing that independence is not the solution for Catalonia's problems. However, CDC changed its name to Catalan European Democratic Party (PDeCAT) to (1) avoid comparisons with the old CiU coalition, which had been criticised for a tremendous history of corruption and fraud and (2) give the party a more centrist and pro-independence image. The party

campaigned for the 2017 referendum, and the events that occurred after the vote made a big impact on the leadership of the party.

Many PDeCAT leaders were tied to the right-wing tradition of CDC, something that bothered Puigdemont's pretensions of giving the party a 'left-wing' renewal. He founded Junts per Catalunya in July 2018, accompanied by civil society well-known leaders such as the Jordis (Jordi Sánchez and Jordi Cuixart), and managed to unite dissident members from Esquerra, the PSC and even the CUP. PDeCAT's leadership, although reluctant at first, merged into Puigdemont's centrist movement, as well as other minor political parties (Action for the Republic, The Greens, Independence Rally, Democrats, etc.). Junts has been defined as a populist, centrist and Catalan nationalist party. I will challenge the concepts of populism and centrism by using a term from political science instead: the catch-all party (in Spanish, partido atrápalo-todo).

These types of parties appeal to transversalism across the political spectrum, escaping a left-right conceptualisation. Junts is a pro-independence ruling party in a typically constituted Western liberal democratic state, which will never push for a working class republic based on a socialist economic model. However, the CDC right-wingers are now trying to claw back the political space from CiU by standing alone in this next election, something that breaks Puigdemont's plans as the confluence between right-wing and left-wing groups is now impossible. Hence, with the most reactionary sector gone (PDeCAT, Convergents and other liberal-conservative soft-nationalist minor groups), Junts has become a radical centre-left party who are very critical of the Spanish state and the conservative ideology the Spanish parties share, but less so with the disastrous handling of the public services at a Catalan level. Junts is becoming the new PSC in the pro-independence bloc, which implies the whole independence

movement is going to move to the left, electorally speaking. Nevertheless, the party shift doesn't mean a change in voting patterns and behaviour, so it's very likely the Catalan bourgeoisie will still trust Junts to form a government in the nation.

ERC can become the new PSC in next week's election

The two left-wing parties in the pro-independence bloc certainly have more disagreements than points of unity. Esquerra, or ERC by its initials in Catalan, is a social democratic party with a progressivist tendency, and a relevant republican discourse, refusing to accept the terms of the Spanish monarchy and the two-party oligarchic system around PP and PSOE (which has now been broken by the birth of Podemos, C's and Vox). However, its language on self-determination evokes an individualistic conception of the rights of the people to decide their future, a liberal nationalist view they share with Junts. In actuality, ERC's nationalism is just a means to an end – their ultimate aim is to create a Catalan Republic based on the principles of Spanish republicanism.

It's now clearer than ever that a Spanish Republic is impracticable due to the resistance of the major powers to simply hold a referendum on that matter and the absence of a single Spanish nationalist party campaigning for the abolition of the aristocracy. The traditional republicans were Izquierda Unida (United Left), which is now almost dead and subjugated to Podemos' leadership. ERC always comprised people from different ideological backgrounds within the Catalanist left, until the 1980s when they started to recognise the necessity of winning an independent state in Catalonia, rather than pursuing federalism. This shift to an openly nationalist position moved away from the party those who didn't want independence to happen, joining either PSC or Esquerra Unida (the Catalan branch of United Left). Since the referendum,

with the exile of ERC's leader, Marta Rovira, the vice president of the Catalan government Pere Aragonés has gained the control of the party, and, in contrast with Torra's radical independence continuity policy, he has tried to calm down the nationalists with a new turn to the federalist response. The Spanish central administration has offered the Catalan executive a seat at the negotiating table, which ERC has accepted.

The problem is the agreement between PSOE's government and ERC ties the republican party to Pedro Sánchez and his policies, as the Catalan party supported him as prime minister after the November 2019 general election. Junts and the CUP have abstained from this dialogue instead. The current strategic decision coming from the elite of the party is focused on "expanding the party's base" to a larger membership that not only includes nationalists and independentists, but the Catalanist wing of the PSC, communists, ecologists and Podemos ex-affiliates. We could see this as an attempt to build a broader Catalanist front composed of social democrats, liberal socialists, ecologists and eurocommunists to get votes from the traditionally PSC-oriented electorate. ERC can become the new PSC in next week's election.

The CUP is the left-wing alternative formation that seeks to challenge the old social democracy. The "cupaires", as they are known in Catalan, are anticapitalists, feminists, ecosocialists, and independentists. There are different caucuses within the membership (anarchists, Trotskyists, Marxist-Leninists, etc.), and their structural organisation is quite democratic. The CUP is now under a process of leadership changes since the exile of Anna Gabriel, CUP's leader during the time of the referendum, who was charged for "sedition" by the Spanish Supreme Court, the same as Puigdemont and other Catalan politicians. They have been experiencing tough times trying to rebuild trust with left-wing voters after the leadership of sociologist Carles Riera, under whom their

electoral performance suffered big losses in 2017 and left them forced to share a parliamentary group with the PP as a result of not being large enough to create one of their own (requiring six representatives).

The unionist bloc

In the unionist bloc, the PSC is the major political formation with a strong Spanish nationalist campaign, especially after PSOE, its partners at a state level, won the 2019 general election under Pedro Sánchez, who belongs to the rebel caucus of the traditional social democratic party. The Catalan socialists moved from a Catalanist and federalist ideology at first towards a more right-wing approach following the 2017 referendum, which explains the removal of the federalist sector, which joined ERC. The PSC has two different types of electorate: Barcelona and Tarragona's anti-independence middle class, and Girona and Lleida's working class. In short, they appeal to the oligarchies in two provinces whilst keeping a progressive rhetoric. This switch from left to right is applicable only to the national question, i.e., it's still a social democratic party in economic terms, but no longer Catalanist, as it has incorporated a strong anti-independence policy and a Spanish nationalist ideology. Shifting this way, the PSC will attempt to gain back its electorate lost to C's (Citizens) in 2017. The liberal current is now more relevant and has more capacity than ever within the formation.

Ciudadanos-C's is a liberal centre-right party that came into Catalan politics to campaign against Catalan-only-speaking schools and Catalan nationalist ideals (paradoxically, with a Spanish ultranationalist approach). Its desire to celebrate Spanish identity above Catalan identity has convinced the anti-nationalist PSC supporters and the ultra right-wing groups to give their votes to Albert Rivera's (now Inés Arrimadas') party instead of the declining Catalan PP. Consequently, C's was the winner in 2017 elections, managing

to achieve a combination of the anti-nationalist vote with that of the working class (mostly in Barcelona). C's got 36 representatives (25.4% of total vote), but from 2018 onwards its constant opportunistic turns to the right or left according to whatever would suit best at the time rendered the party incapable of maintaining a good position in Spanish politics. In last year's general election, C's suffered a huge loss of seats (from 57 to 10), and, after their leader's resignation, the liberals are experiencing a precipitous decline that will definitely bring joy to the PP and PSC.
Neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groupings that previously tended to operate on the margins of politics now have an electoral vehicle to bring their hate speech to parliament

The classic right-wing People's Party (PP) isn't quite as popular in Catalonia, as they are associated with the past and Francoist ideologies. Despite the overwhelming majority of Catalans rejecting the party, the PP has been capable of retaining some votes thanks to its anti-Catalan nationalism message and good relations with CiU. The rise of C's during the Catalan independence process and the recent appearance of Vox have prevented the PP from becoming the first option for Spanish nationalist voters. Also, the bad choices of the leadership, with the ex-candidate Xavier García Albiol being openly racist against Roma people and the lack of new charismatic leaders in Catalonia to replace him, have left the party with no chance of ruling the Generalitat. They would prefer to run Catalonia from the central administration in Madrid, despite not having more than four representatives in the Northeastern nation.

As for the extreme right-wing, represented by the Spanish ultras of Vox, it is too soon to analyse the situation of Santiago Abascal's group in the northeast. We know that, since the referendum, the Spanish right-wing has become far more extreme and exclusionary and, even though Vox has no representation or electoral base in Catalonia, neo-fascist and

neo-Nazi groupings that previously tended to operate on the margins of politics now have an electoral vehicle to bring their hate speech to parliament. It's concerning how Vox's participation in the Catalan institutions could turn into another excuse for the Spanish state to pass legislation that impedes self-determination rights, and it is, of course, a threat to the human, collective and individual rights of the Catalan people.

Conclusions

The polls show a strong decline of C's, which would obtain 13-15 seats, down from the 36 they have held since 2017. Polls also show a disputed and narrow victory for either PSC or ERC, with 30-35 seats for each party. Junts would fall consequently to ERC's rise. Podemos-EU-Equo and PP would remain in between seven and 12 seats. We will probably see a recovery from the CUP; the left-wing party would obtain eight to 14 seats (they have had four since 2017). Vox would obtain anywhere from six to 10 representatives, making a big breakthrough in Catalonia.

There will be a huge difficulty in forming alliances and there is the possibility that the pro-independence and unionist blocs will break themselves apart because of the complexity of the situation and the narrow outcome expected. If the PSC wins the election, the obligation to develop agreements with the extreme right to get a majority might challenge the unionist bloc's possibilities (primarily due to PSOE's strategy at the state level opposing Vox, which makes this coalition incoherent in Catalonia, rather than democratic obligation). In the same way, ERC and Junts will require an agreement (including the CUP) to regain the parliamentary majority. Both parties are currently in a dispute and taking opposite directions ideologically and strategically. This means the idea of a PSC-ERC coalition is quite possible. We still don't know the political implications that could have, but what we can anticipate is the end of the independence process started

in 2014-15.

Glossary

Catalanism: Ideology pointing to the defence of Catalan's autonomy within the Spanish state, it was developed around the first period of the 20st century by early nationalists who didn't support self-determination but thought Spain should be a decentralised country.
Catalan nationalism: Ideology that identifies Catalonia as a nation with inalienable rights such as self-determination within the Spanish state.
Catalan independence: Ideology that defends Catalonia should be an independent state outside Spain.
Transversalism: Political strategy that, in opposition to identity politics, intends to represent every group of society regardless of class, ideology, nationality, race or gender.
Regionalism: Ideology that defends regional autonomy and decentralisation policies within a state.

Introduction and article republished from Socialist Resistance

Original article from *Republican Socialist Platform.*

Vigil for the Valley – the Occupation of Collina Street

Paul Inglis, of *ecosocialist.scot*, reports from Glasgow from the occupation of Collina Street. This article was originally published by *Bella Caledonia*.

On Friday the 15th of January, a gazebo went up on a patch of vacant land at Collina Street in Maryhill, Glasgow, and a

group of local residents settled, as much as one can settle anywhere on a cold and wet day, into an occupation. Their goal: To remain in place on the land until either the city council comes to the negotiating table to speak with them, or they are forcibly evicted. What is it that has led a group of people to take up position on a windswept hill not just in the middle of a damp and frosty winter, but in the middle of a global pandemic? Such conviction suggests that a keen political struggle is in progress. So to get an idea of why Collina Street is being occupied, I got talking to Norman Cunningham, a resident of Maryhill's Wyndford neighbourhood who helped organise the action.

Norman began by explaining the background to the Collina Street issue. Years ago, before it was a patch of vacant land up for sale, this part of the neighbourhood hosted social housing and was known by locals as "the Valley." But in 2007 the houses were demolished, and the land they stood on has been empty since. Shortly before demolition, the old social housing even ended up in several episodes of Still Game, standing in for the fictional streets of Craiglang. That was it for Collina Street, at least until November 2020- This was when Wyndford residents first became aware that the site was soon to be sold off. One day a sign went up on the land announcing a sale organised by City Property, Glasgow City Council's real estate branch, and that was the only indication given to locals that the land was up for grabs.

Later a City Property brochure was found advertising the sale, stipulating the Collina Street land would be marked for a private housing development- four hundred houses, one hundred and five of which are to be made available as "affordable housing for first time buyers." Norman noted that this sort of marketing language about "affordable homes" tends to be a euphemism for the more cheaply-built housing, and as for the remaining two hundred and ninety five houses, there are no restrictions on who can buy them, leaving them prey to be

snapped up by buy-to-let landlords with the money to outbid Wyndford locals.

Unhappy with this sudden sale and unconvinced that one hundred and five “affordable homes” would fulfil the council’s social housing obligation in any case, residents of the Wyndford area, organised in a tenants union affiliated with Living Rent, decided to get talking and work out what action could be taken to change the terms of sale and get a social housing option on the table. First off they put in some freedom of information requests to the city council and found that back in 2007 the council had conducted, via an outside agency, a community consultation about the Wyndford area in general as part of the Maryhill-Springburn Transformational Regeneration Masterplan drawn up in the early 2000’s. This consultation queried just sixty nine people over the course of five meetings, and there was no record of who attended or how many people came to each individual meeting. Nevertheless, those few who were consulted voiced a wish for more social housing, and for better disability access. What struck the Wyndford residents however, was that no consultation had been carried out about the Collina Street land in particular at any point in the intervening years. Norman argued that because *some* social housing had been built in the area since 2007, the council felt that their original consultation had been met long ago, and that they could press on with the selloff at Collina Street now.

The next action of the Wyndford Living Rent members was to hold a “Vigil for the Valley”, which took place on the 14th November and saw around thirty locals turning out for a socially-distanced demonstration at Collina Street calling for the sale to be stopped and for the council to do a new, more comprehensive survey of the Wyndford community about the Valley’s future. Some progress forward was made with the council deciding to delay the sale until the 15th January 2021, which gave the Wyndford Union breathing space to mount a

campaign and raise awareness.

Unfortunately, despite consistent requests for a meeting with the council, the campaign received no response until the evening of Tuesday 12th January, when Patrick Flynn, head of housing for Glasgow city council came to a public zoom meeting put on by the campaign. However, he did not give any definite answers to questions about why the council was selling the land for private development. Entirely unsatisfied with this response, the Wyndford Tenants Union proceeded to announce their occupation at the end of the meeting. In addition, the next morning the campaign put up an online poll with three options: 1. That the council continues to sell the land for private development, 2. That the land is used for social housing in partnership with local housing association or 3. That there is a community buyout of the land, with plans for social housing and community enterprise. Just two days later, this poll had gathered 103 responses, with 96.2 percent of people voting for the second two options. Overall, 68 percent voted for the community buyout option and just 3.8 percent agreed with the council's private selloff. This poll was simply done as a sort of provisional show of feeling, not as a binding consultation. Even so, it managed to exceed the official 2007 consultation in scope in a matter of days, and it demonstrates clearly that the appetite for social housing in Wyndford has not yet been met.

As of the morning of Thursday 14th the council were still briefing journalists that the sale was going ahead, but later that afternoon it was suddenly announced that the sale would be postponed once more due to COVID-19. Even so, a postponement is not a full halt, and the goal of negotiations and a new consultation had still not been met. So the next day, the occupation of the Collina Street land began.

With the background of the occupation established, I then asked Norman to go into detail on the goals of the Wyndford

Union. The initial goal of the union, he told me, was simply to stop the sale, get the council to talk, and hopefully win a social housing development instead of a private development. But it was realised fairly early on by the campaign that just saying “no sale, no private housing” was not enough, and that a positive alternative needed to be provided in place of private housing. Calling for social housing from the local housing association was one option, but this of course depends on whether or not the housing association is willing to buy the land. There was another option, however, and one that would allow the community itself to take a much more active role in shaping their future. This is the idea of a community buyout, and by the beginning of the occupation it had become the union’s goal for Collina Street. I was curious to find out what this entailed, and Norman was very enthusiastic to tell me all about it.

The typical local housing tenant isn’t aware of the community buyout option, Norman told me, but there are examples of communities running their own housing right here in Glasgow. One example is West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative, which has existed as a community social housing enterprise for 40 years. The strength of a community buyout is that it could give locals a greater say over not only about the type of housing built on the land but possibly also the kind of energy used to heat them. Norman’s vision revolves around the potential of the Passivhaus standard of housing- These are homes that use zero carbon in construction, zero carbon in heating, and which reduce heating bills by eighty five percent. They are totally sealed, with a heat recovery ventilation system, triple glazing, and a lifespan of over sixty years. He notes that Glasgow City Council have previously given planning permission for a Passivhaus-style development in Dalmarnock, so they are not unfamiliar with them.

As to the heating system for these houses, Norman is excited

by the proximity of Collina Street to the Kelvin River. This would allow for the installation of an industrial size heat pump which can, using the cold water of rivers or lakes in a heat exchanger, heat water and pump it around a district heating system. To this effect Norman has been speaking about the possibility of using heat pumps on the Kelvin with the director of Star Refrigeration, a company which set up heat pumps for Drammen, a Norwegian town of 64,000 people. A heating system of this kind could potentially heat the entirety of Northern Maryhill and, just like the Passivhaus standard, it is not alien to Scotland- Norman pointed out that that West Dumbartonshire council has now installed and commissioned a similar heat pump district heating development at the old John Brown shipyard site in Clydebank.

All of this infrastructure would certainly be expensive to set up initially, but Norman argues that the long term benefits, both ecologically and in savings on energy, are well worth the upfront costs. Not only this, but it can provide new opportunities and skills for the community. For example, the building of the houses themselves could involve the community through a programme of training in new construction skills. Additionally, the hot water in the district heating system could also be piped through greenhouses before going back to the pumps, letting locals gain new skills in horticulture growing sustainable local produce that could be used by the residents or sold to raise money for the community. The whole point of this, Norman said, is “community involvement and leadership-” To give the people of Wyndford a decent environment, meaningful work, and the ability to take their community into their own hands. “If we actually achieved half of this it would be a showcase for the world,” he concluded.

Moving from the future goal of the Wyndford residents to the day-to-day struggle at Collina Street, I asked Norman how the occupation has been going so far and what sort of challenges they have been facing. As can be expected, the cold, damp and

windy weather has consistently made things difficult. The gazebo that initially went up unfortunately was in danger of blowing away and so had to be taken down, but the occupation was soon able to get a tent set up. Quite crucial to the continuation of the occupation is getting more shelter, and as such the occupiers have been hoping to get a caravan onto the site. Since my discussion with Norman, a little wooden bothy has also been built on the site and named, quite appropriately, “Boaby the Bothy” after Still Game’s Boaby the Barman.

The other great challenge the occupation is facing is of course presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we well know by now, the pandemic and necessity of social distancing has radically changed, hindered or even made impossible what were once elementary forms of political protest, from the picket to the rally. Similarly, direct action tactics like occupations end up being severely modified by the need to social distance. While in normal times a large protest camp is a measure of strength, in the era of pandemic a gathering like that is above all a health risk, both to the occupiers and the general public. So the occupation has proceeded on a much reduced scale, with only a small number of people, two or three, holding Collina Street. As only one person can make use of each piece of accommodation, whether it be a tent or a caravan, at any one time, this makes the securing of multiple shelters an especial priority.

The small size of the occupation has a few other consequences. On the one hand, it makes the camp significantly easier to evict by force. But on the other hand, it does also mean that the occupation is easier to maintain over time. If only two or three people can be at Collina Street at a time then this means you don’t need a particularly large pool of people to replenish the occupation in shifts, which in turn allows the occupiers to be cycled out more frequently to avoid burnout. COVID may reduce the scope of the action, but it is not

without elements that can be turned to the advantage of the occupiers.

Regardless of the weather and the pandemic, the occupation is continuing apace. Norman was quite enthusiastic about the way in which their cause was being received by the public, speaking of how passers-by and people out walking their dogs would stop by, initially doing so out of curiosity but then staying to talk about politics and the neighbourhood. When Norman explains that the issue isn't just about a few houses, but about what a community can do to take its future into its own hands through measures like buyouts, he reports that the response is one of interest and excitement from the locals. It evokes the way in which occupations, in reclaiming land for use of the people, have a powerful ability to capture the public imagination and provide space for new ways of seeing, thinking and living to be experimented with and worked out. In the last decade Zuccotti Park, Tahrir Square and Gezi Park have all played a role like this, not only in the lives of the residents of New York, Cairo and Istanbul, but also in the imaginations of people all over the world.

Norman evoked Glasgow's own part in that global occupying tradition by connecting Collina Street with the history of the "Pollok Free State" occupation of the early 1990's, which aimed at stopping the construction of a motorway through Pollok Country Park. He hopes that the Collina Street occupation can, like that protest movement of a previous generation, rekindle some of the fighting spirit that Glasgow has been known for, the fighting spirit of Mary Barbour, John Maclean and the anti-Poll Tax Federation. Already the occupation has been generating a lot of cross-generational interest, both from young people in their 20's and from people in their 40's and older, something that Norman, who is himself 70 years old, is very happy to see.

It of course remains to be seen what the end result of all this will be. At time of writing the sale of Collina Street is

set to begin on February 5th, and the council have not shown any further signs of listening to the Wyndford Tenants Union. Additionally, since I have spoken to Norman, a charity, "The Valley, Maryhill SCIO" has been set up to apply for a buy out or asset transfer of the Collina Street land under Community Right to Buy legislation. As its call for volunteer trustees states, this would constitute "the largest urban community buyout in Scottish history." As for the occupation, it may yet be in for a long stint up on that cold and windy hill as the result of the buyout attempt is awaited. But no matter what happens, Norman is resolute that the occupation will hold its ground and see the struggle through: "By being there in this weather we're demonstrating our convictions and the local people are seeing that."

I ended by asking Norman how readers of this article can show their support for the occupation. Unfortunately, due to the need for social distancing, it isn't really feasible for members of the public to join the occupation in substantial numbers. A donated flask of soup or two is certainly always appreciated though, especially considering the winter weather. There are also ways of helping out virtually. First port of call is visiting the "Still Game for The Valley" Facebook group. Here you'll be able to find information about the occupation and any updates on their progress. If you can share news and information about the occupation with your family and friends, your trade unions and local community groups, that will help get the word out. Additionally, the issue of the occupation could be brought to meetings of your local trade union, tenants union or political party branches, anywhere where resolutions of support can be passed. Another way of helping virtually is to email your local MSPs, MPs and councillors asking them about the lack of consultation about private selloffs of land like at Collina Street, and calling on them to support the demands of the occupation.

One other more immediate way you can help is by providing

storage space. Norman asked me to put a request here from the occupation for a shipping container that could be loaned to them. This would be a great help in giving the occupiers a secure and dry place to store their equipment on site. If you can help in this way, please get in touch with Norman Cunningham at normdbc@gmail.com or call 07712427315.

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Statement by Anticapitalistes before 14 February elections in Catalunya

Anticapitalistes is the organisation of the Fourth International in Catalonia. The following article was originally published in Catalan on their website and subsequently in Spanish from which it has been translated to English for the Fourth International website. ***In the coming weeks we face early elections in Catalonia, which will finally be held as case numbers surge and hospitals are overwhelmed in the third wave of the pandemic. It is no secret that the interests of the parties and of sections of the government have taken precedence over public health, forcing a call for elections that could violate democratic rights and put public health at risk. And, once again, this is being imposed by a political use of the justice system. On the other hand, the Catalan government, for its part, in addition to relying on a legally weak decree, has spent the last year delaying the elections and calculating when to hold them based purely on its own party interests.***

At this point, we should point out that it is a failed

parliamentary period, closed by state repression, that is coming to an end. We consider it a failure because it has not allowed us to reorganise the struggle for self determination in a way that draws on the lessons of October 2017, and it has included a policy of repression against pro-independence activists by the Generalitat, or regional government, itself. Moreover, it is another lost legislature from a social point of view, because neoliberal policies have continued, without reversing the privatisations and cuts of more than a decade ago that left the public sector extremely weak. The neoliberal continuity practised by the government of Junts per Catalunya and ERC put the Catalan public sector in a situation of even more severe vulnerability once the health crisis of the pandemic exploded.[1]

In the face of this call, it is necessary to denounce once again that there are nearly a million Catalan people who are denied the most basic civil and political rights by institutional racism and who will not have the right to vote. There can be no genuinely democratic elections with a Law on Foreigners that excludes people from citizenship and a Spanish Constitution that denies the right to vote to those who do not have the nationality.

The end of the road within an organisation that has turned towards governmentalism and institutionalisation

As *Anticapitalistes* we have brought to an end our activity within the framework of Catalunya en Comú and Podem when the policy of a subordinate alliance with the PSC and the PSOE was confirmed by this political organisation and by Unidas Podemos at the level of the Spanish state.[2] This governmentalist turn, adopted from 2016 onwards by the Podemos leadership and replicated by the other organisations, has distorted what was an alternative project to the two-party system and the regime. It now looks too much like the institutional left that it set

out to challenge in the first place. En Comú Podem in Catalonia has in no sense maintained a profile distinct from that of Podemos in the Spanish state, but has made its own the policy of subordination to the PSOE and the PSC. In Catalonia, this orientation is reflected in its commitment to a tripartite with the PSC and ERC, and in the inclusion among its candidates of individuals with an evident commitment to institutionalisation.

The entry into the state government as a minority partner of the PSOE has meant a qualitative leap in the bid to become part of the government and abandon any commitment to changing the system. Once integrated into the executive, the inability to respond to problems such as unemployment, precarious working conditions, rises in electricity prices or evictions, has fuelled the approach of "No se puede" (no we can't), causing demoralisation among the popular classes and discrediting alternatives to neoliberalism.[3] This climate of opinion has a devastating impact on the whole of the social, political and trade union left, even those sectors that from the beginning opposed joining a government based on social liberalism.

The CUP: a campaign for rupture, but without opening up to new sectors

The candidates of the *CUP-Un Nou Cicle per Guanyar*[4] guarantee the existence of a slate that is anti-capitalist and in favour of a rupture in these elections, a fact that we value positively. Its existence helps to make visible proposals for a break with the current institutional framework and neoliberal policies. In the same way, it tries to place at the centre ideas such as the need for a rescue plan to confront the Covid crisis, to move towards a planned economy and to take control of strategic sectors.

At the same time, we consider that it is a proposal that is

too much of a continuation of the previous CUP-CC election campaigns, and does not allow for a qualitative leap towards a more open-minded reconstruction of the alternative left, breaking from the limits of the previous political cycle and going beyond the traditional space of the *Esquerra Independentista*. A broader electoral agreement that would have included other currents with which we share an anti-capitalist programme would have been positive, as an initial step to move forward in the construction of a new instrument of convergence capable of disputing the majority of society.

The main limits we see in the *CUP-UNCpG* proposal are, firstly, that it is only aimed at the pro-independence movement and does not have a policy towards the social base of the left which does not support independence but which is in favour of the right to decide. Its project does not specifically address the people around *Comuns* who are critical of that organisation's governmentalist drift. Nor does it specifically address sectors of the new generations of feminist and environmental activists who are not clearly pro-independence.

This issue is linked to another strategic difference. The CUP's political proposal to build a Catalan republic has little to do with the need to bring down the regime of '78 in order to achieve it. As demonstrated in October 2017, the success of the struggle for Catalan self-determination is connected to weakening the Spanish state and building the broadest possible kinds of solidarity. In this sense, this organisation has taken steps in recent times towards weaving stronger alliances with sectors that are in favour of a rupture in the rest of the Spanish state. But it has not yet itself taken on the task of promoting a political movement capable of overturning the regime and making constituent processes possible.

Finally, its strategy for post-electoral alliances is not yet clear, nor is its position on participation in a government with the ERC and JuntsxCat. We believe that the policy of

unity towards the rest of the pro-independence forces should be made while clearly asserting autonomy with respect to their institutional projects and their governmental action. An anti-capitalist alternative, in order to be credible, cannot have its hands tied by forces that apply neoliberal policies. In the same way, we are concerned about some municipal pacts since the 2019 elections that represent false shortcuts in an extremely complex and difficult political context. One of the CUP's strengths so far has been its ability to withstand the pressure towards institutionalisation.

Beyond 14F: a new shared space for the pro- rupture, pro-Independence left

Our political commitment is to promote the reconstruction of a radical and pro-sovereignty left that will be the vehicle for an alternative, both in the face of the socio-economic crisis, and in relation to the desire for self-determination. This reconstruction must be popular and social in content, with a commitment to making a break, overcoming the pre-existing structures and not allowing the crack in the legitimacy of the '78 regime to be closed.

There are many urgent tasks on the table when it comes to making a shared proposal and we cannot develop them all in this communiqué. The main challenge is to contribute to the promotion of a historic bloc of the popular classes with a programme as radical as the challenges ahead of us: from the ecological crisis to the reordering of neoliberal capitalism after the coronavirus.

Within this reconstruction, it is necessary to learn from the mistakes made by the left with an institutionalist evolution and a logic of support for governments that endorse socio-liberal policies, abandoning any project of rupture and any constituent impulse. We need a strategy that is not locked into institutions that are not ours and that builds a new

institutionalism with the objectives of anti-capitalist transformation.

We need tools built from the ground up, with criteria of democracy, political plurality and openness to the social and movement fabric of their territories. Feminist candidacies that are committed to social transformation and with a programme of rupture that is commensurate with the crisis of civilisation.

It is also necessary to criticise strategic approaches that are not capable of addressing the entire social base of the left, both pro-independence and non-independence. We have always considered that a social transformation in Catalonia must bring together both of the sentiments that have been expressed massively since 2011, the 15M *Indignados* movement and its legacy, and the pro-independence process, the keys to initiating a constituent process for a Catalan republic. It is essential to link the defence of Catalan sovereignty with the fight against austerity and precariousness, the only way to broaden majorities and advance in a real social transformation. In this sense, we have a recent example in the defence of the Catalan laws promoted by the housing movement (decree 17/2019 and the regulation law) in the face of the attack by the Popular Party and the Constitutional Court.[5]

We need a political proposal that allows us to weave alliances, on the one hand, with sectors and social movements that have seen part of their hopes and efforts lost due to the defeat of the cycle opened by 15M. And, on the other hand, with pro-sovereignty and pro-independence sectors, some critical of certain positions in the face of the referendum of 1 October, and others exhausted by the balancing games between pragmatism and "autonomism".[6] But it also needs to incorporate a whole generation of activists who have not been linked to previous political projects and who have felt, in the flourishing of movements such as the feminist movement or the youth movement against climate change, the need to organise

themselves.

14F: we vote against the far right and neoliberalism

The political proposal that we believe is needed has yet to be built and, therefore, Anticapitalistes has decided not to put forward candidates in these elections. We are aware that there is a legitimate malaise among many people due to the discrediting of politics and the disenchantment with the different political forces, a fact that makes even more evident the need to build a new political instrument. Even so, we believe that it is necessary to combat apathy and that people must vote because we have a lot at stake in these elections:

Firstly, the polls point to a strong showing for the far-right Vox party. Although the Popular Party and Ciudadanos share reactionary measures and hate speech[7], the possibility of an explicitly, extreme right-wing party getting members of Parliament is terrible news for the popular classes and would mean an advance for racism, sexism, hatred against LGTBI people and the most explicit authoritarianism.

Secondly, the policies being promoted by the Generalitat, at a key moment for the way out of the crisis, have a real impact on our living conditions. If neoliberal policies continue to be imposed and an emergency social plan is ignored, the working people of Catalonia will continue to suffer from fear, uncertainty and precariousness.

Finally, the results of these elections will also determine the role that the different political projects will play in the reconstruction of the left, that is to say, the forces that are in the process of integration into the system, and those that want to break with it. For these reasons, we want to call for a vote for the *CUP-Un Nou Cicle per Guanyar* candidates, which represent an anti-capitalist and

anti-austerity option oriented towards confrontation with the state.

At the same time, we want to take advantage of these elections to defend the need for an orientation of "Let's change course: let's expropriate it!", promoting a campaign in defence of the democratisation of the economy, the distribution of work and wealth, the reinforcement of public services and the introduction of planning to guarantee the needs of the social majority.8

5 February 2021

- 1.Junts per Catalunya: One of the two main nationalist parties in Catalonia. Liberal right. Puigdemont the leader in exile is its emblematic figure. ERC: Esquera Republicana Catalana: (Catalan Republican Left) The other major nationalist party. Social-liberal
- 2.Catalunya En Comun Podem. Electoral alliance between what remains of Podemos in Catalonia (Podem) and the non-nationalist left-wing coalition "En Comun" (formerly "comuns") largely under the influence of sectors of the former Catalan CP (PSUC). PSC. Socialist Party of Catalonia. PSOE. Socialist Party in the Spanish State, in the central government. Unidas Podemos. Name of the coalition led by Podemos in the Spanish state, alliance with sectors of the former PCE. Very minority in the government led by PSOE.
- 3."No, we can't" refers to the old Podemos slogan "Si, se puede" (Yes, we can!).
- 4.Title of the current list led by the CUP. The CUP (People's Unity Candidatures) is an anti-capitalist independence organisation.
- 5.Partido Popular (PP) Main right-wing party, heir to Franco's regime.
- 6.Allusion to the debates following the referendum of October 2017 and the repression in which the different nationalist currents were leaning either towards an

immediate “implementation” of the “Catalan Republic” or towards negotiations to gain more “autonomy” in the immediate future.

- 7.Ciudadanos (Citizens). Centre-right party.
- 8.¡Cambiemos de rumbo: expropiemoslo! title of the Anticapitalistes campaign (see the website http://anticap…).