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…).