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Spanish State

Anticapitalistas hold second congress

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV516 - January 2018 -

Publication date: Sunday 7 January 2018

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Anticapitalistas (the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state) held its second congress in Madrid (December 7-9, 2017). To understand the context and the challenges, Juan Tortosa met Brais Fernández, a member of the group's leadership.

What is Anticapitalistas, how did it emerge?

Anticapitalistas is the continuation of Izquierda Anticapitalista. We have changed our name to adapt to the rules imposed by the Podemos leadership: they prevent activists from a party structure from participating in the leadership bodies of Podemos. Another reason: the term "left" became devalued sharply in Spain after 15M (the abbreviation for the movement of *Indignados* which started with the occupation of the Plaza del Sol, May 15, 2011).

Beyond these reasons, there is a change of political conception. Izquierda Anticapitalista saw itself as a broad anti-capitalist group (though it failed to achieve this goal) to the left of the reformist left. Anticapitalistas assumes a new task: to build broad anti-neoliberal fronts on the electoral level, while building an independent revolutionary organization and strong and autonomous extra-parliamentary movements. A new hypothesis for a new stage, after the experience of 15M.

The 2nd congress of Anticapitalistas had as its theme "To build the movement, build anti-capitalism". What were the most important challenges?

We had two big debates. First, an intense and very interesting debate on the national question, after the Catalan experience and the radicalization of the territorial crisis in Spain. It is a debate in progress and an open one. From our defence of the right to self-determination, we have other questions: what do constituent processes mean and how do they materialize? Do we defend a state model or not? Which one? How do we approach the national question, avoiding falling into what Gramsci called "cosmopolitan deracination", but maintaining an internationalist perspective?

Second, we discussed how to implant ourselves in a working class in times of reflux. We need to be more involved with youth, unions, feminist and environmental movements. We do not want to be an organization strongly represented in institutions, but with few activists at the grassroots level.

Two out of three delegates were youth and many women were present. How did you go about replacing the old guard?

This succession was quite natural, because the old guard - coming from the Liga comunista revolucionaria (LCR) - was always very generous to take this step; it did not cling to internal power, unlike in the Communist parties. There has always been a permanent opening: we collect the legacy of the elders, while generating new references together. For example - and this is quite natural - the younger generation reads Gramsci more than Trotsky. We had a lot of luck with the people who come from the LCR: they have an incredible capacity to assimilate new experiences, something unique on the European left.

How do you experience the tension between institutional work and street presence to fight in the thousands of social fronts where you are involved?

It's difficult. The representative institutions of the capitalist state absorb a lot. This liberal mechanism serves to condense political contradictions in a space foreign to social materiality. It takes a lot of time and imposes an artificial temporality. Therefore, we must maintain a militancy linked to the movement, bringing other problems to the organization and proposing a centre of gravity oriented towards the base.

You have tense relations with the majority leadership of Podemos. What are the main challenges for Podemos and your current inside Podemos? How do you combine your activism within Podemos and your organizational independence?

Anticapitalistas is not a current of Podemos. It is an organized movement that impels radical broad currents. Not all our activists are in Podemos, although we are certainly identified as the leader of the critical sector. It is important to know this, because otherwise you do not understand the experience of Anticapitalistas.

There is constant tension with the Podemos leadership, which is very authoritarian and has difficulty in observing pluralism. We would like a better collaboration, but it is difficult with the political culture of Podemos.

Finally, what are your areas of work for the next few years?

We need to be better implanted locally and in the strategic sectors of the social struggle: trade unions, feminist and environmental movements. There are times of reflux, a reaction of the ruling classes to restore order. It is therefore necessary to train cadres, to continue to work on the political elaboration and the renovation of militant Marxist theory, to help advance the electoral front and to build positions beyond parliaments capable of constituting sufficient counter-powers strong enough to face capital. The project of the bourgeoisie for the working classes in the south of Europe is more impoverishment and more state authoritarianism. We must therefore work to promote a massive and radical proposal, hegemonic, based on social conflict, responding fiercely to the class war, but at the same time able to involve people who are not necessarily revolutionaries.