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Chile:

The social movement and future convergences

- IV Online magazine - 2014 - IV471 - April 2014 -

Publication date: Tuesday 1 April 2014

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Interview with Roxana Miranda, presidential candidate at the 2013 elections and president of the Igualdad party, and Christian Cepeda, an activist in the party. The interview was conducted by Franck Gaudichaud

Can you say a few words on the Igualdad (Equality) party and its history?

The Igualdad party began its process of legalization in 2010 and became a party on a national scale in May 2013. It is present in eight regions: Arica, Iquique, Antofagasta, Coquimbo, Metropolitan, Valparaiso, Concepcion, Coyhaique. It participated in the municipal elections of 2012 and the presidential elections of 2013.

Igualdad defines itself as an instrument of the social movements to bring about a revolutionary transformation from below. It is anti-capitalist and its slogan is "Que el pueblo mande" ("Let the people decide").

What balance sheet do you make of the candidacy and results of Roxana Miranda?

First, we should say that from the beginning we thought that the presentation of our candidacy did not enter into an electoralist logic. The success or failure of the campaign could not be measured in numbers of votes. But nor did we want a symbolic act or a candidacy of witness.

Our political objective in this electoral context was to use the conjuncture to project at the national level a revolutionary political alternative breaking with the discourse and practices of the traditional left. To propose and support the candidacy of Roxana Miranda had as its objective posing popular collective and independent action as one of the structural elements of this new period.

That is why in terms of a balance sheet, if we are absolutely aware that a result of 1.3 % is low or marginal in terms of those who calculate politics with the eyes of power, we think that our reception was much better than we expected.

The discourse of Roxana Miranda was affecting in its simplicity and sincerity, breaking with the "technocratic" framework of the very narrow club of those who are authorized to speak and practice politics in Chile. She has confronted the powerful and unveiled the cruelty with which the economic system treats millions of Chileans. We have not sought to theorise or temper the discourse but to reveal that a section of this population is tired of the system of the political parties and its servile role in relation to the big enterprises. The simplicity but also the strength of the candidacy has entered into the heads and hearts of hundreds of thousands of Chileans the "crazy" idea that maybe the people can decide in this country. A germ of rebellion which should yet develop but in which from now on Igualdad is considered as a significant actor.

On the other hand one of Igualdad's objectives was to make part of this electoral conjuncture in the context of a political convergence with all the anti-capitalist actors located outside of the Concertacion plus Communist Party axis. This objective was not realized, because the anti-capitalist forces as a whole bear the heavy weight of lack of confidence and objectives specific to teach. Many of the collectives and movements of the anti-capitalist left have preferred the old conceptions of politics and have engaged in electoralist strategies.

Another negative element has been the incapacity of the structure of Igualdad to maximise the immense media

impact of the candidacy at the national level. Igualdad, which has not yet completed its process of national implantation, could not project itself as a real political force except in a few places and it remains still to develop a real national structure.

What role could the Pobladores movement play in the reactivation of social struggles and the constitution of an anti-capitalist movement in Chile?

The recent electoral process has given us some insights on how to achieve a convergence among the different anti-capitalist collectives. And without any doubt it is up to us in the first place to agree on some essential elements for the coming period. We think that in the period to come the role of the social movements is central. The promises of Bachelet and the New Majority (Nueva Mayoría) will not be kept. Our role will then be that of the motor of discontent and de-legitimization not only of the government but also the whole political system. In the concrete practice of mobilization we will find the confidence necessary to the creation of alliances with the sectors in struggle of the Mapuche people, high school students, workers, people in the neighborhoods. We need a common project which emerges from these processes of struggle and from there we will build leaderships and legitimacies.

The future convergences should be built on the basis of all sectors in struggle. The challenge for Igualdad and the movements which make it up is to be present there.