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Catalonia

# Four theses on the Catalan crisis

- Features -

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### **Thesis 1: The Catalan crisis has been caused by the state apparatus of the Spanish liberal monarchy, with the intention of controlling the political consequences of the economic crisis of neoliberalism.**

What is happening in Catalonia now is not a causality; it goes far beyond the train crash, predicted by Anguita, between two sectors of the bourgeoisie, Spanish and Catalan. The confrontation with the Catalan people – not only with its bourgeoisie – has been directly sought by the actual powers of the state. It is not an error of calculation; although the degree of popular mobilization of Catalan society is unpredictable, the performance of the popular government seems to have been planned in detail. This provocation constitutes the supreme difficulty that Catalans have to overcome in order to have access to a dignified future, in break with the Kingdom of Spain, because I am not talking about a rupture with a hypothetical Spanish Republic, which could peacefully resolve the question.

The facts that corroborate this version of the political events in Catalonia are known:

a) the beginning: after considering a series of appeals submitted by the conservative party, in 2010 the Spanish state annulled a reform of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 2006. As is known this Statute was: 1) approved by the Parliament of Catalonia, 2) approved by the Spanish Cortes, 3) approved by a referendum of Catalan citizens, 4) perfectly assimilable within the political order of the liberal monarchy.

b) the process: the reaction of Catalan citizens was spectacular with a huge mobilization that culminated in a demonstration of one and a half million people in July 2010 under the slogan “we are a nation, we decided”. This mobilization has not stopped growing and developing since then, in the diadas -National Day of Catalonia, September 11- and other political events, such as the symbolic referendums promoted by the CUP. Faced with which the Spanish state has only one answer: the application of repressive measures, condemning the political leaders of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia with various penalties such as exorbitant fines, disqualification from political office, arbitrary detention and criminal trials with strong threats of prison.

c) the culmination: the denial of dialogue and the illegalization of the referendum before a Catalan citizenry increasingly critical of the impositions of a Spanish state led by its most reactionary wing, acting in an increasingly repressive way by refusing any conciliatory solution to the problem, which would mean the reform of the Spanish Constitution of 1978. The PP government has exacerbated the Catalan problem, leading to the current crisis of legitimacy of the liberal monarchy among Catalan citizens, in order to reinforce its legitimacy among other Spaniards.

With these antecedents the most decisive question is: why has the conservative government acted like this, even putting at risk the political stability of the liberal state? The most obvious answer is that the political stability of the state was already at risk due to the economic crisis and the confrontation with Catalonia is a stratagem to sustain the monarchical structures of political power.

### **Thesis 2: The plans of the financial oligarchy for Spain, in line with the authoritarian drift of European societies, are aimed at cutting freedoms and strengthening the repressive powers of the state.**

Starting from the principle that the PP does not act in its own name, but in the service of the interests of the international financial oligarchy, interests represented in the Spanish state by the institutions of the liberal monarchy, it is essential to understand the strategic plans of the oligarchy in order to counter them: the performance of the

conservative government is not improvised and capricious, but a plan of consciously designed political action.

There is a first obvious intuition: the social crisis has to be very deep to make it decide to act like this. And indeed 15-M showed that the institutions of the liberal system were extensively delegitimized, especially among the young, and there was a risk of the system of domination in the Spanish state sinking - especially when similar processes spread throughout the Mediterranean area, in North Africa, in the Middle East and Southern Europe. The 15-M movement brought into the political arena a fundamental issue in the economic development of Spanish neoliberalism: its lack of a future, the fact of having built an unbalanced and financialised economy that was rapidly sinking into misery, together with the political institutions and the ideology that had sustained it.

That clear consciousness became evident at the outbreak of the economic crisis. We have to point out the roots of the problem:

a) The economic model based on the deindustrialization of the country, promoted by the governments of the PSOE following the entry into Europe, is the cause of the enormous structural unemployment of the Spanish economy - abusive contracts cannot be considered a true solution to this problem;

b) The political model works through the structural corruption of the political class associated with the entrepreneurs, especially in the urban construction sector, which led to the crisis of overproduction in this sector.

Liberal bipartisanship was denounced as a political system incapable of tackling the country's problems and the citizens understood that corruption was an insurmountable obstacle to overcoming the economic crisis.

A second obvious observation: the authoritarian and repressive reaction typical of the capitalist dominant class – the financial oligarchy – at times of the rupture of social order, has been put back into practice in the last five years in all the imperialist countries grouped in NATO. The Spanish framing of that oligarchy is represented politically by the monarchy, which has historically distinguished itself by effectively managing the resort to repression through the coercive apparatuses of the state protected by the ideological apparatuses, the Catholic Church especially – today replaced effectively by the means of social media.

Within the context of the authoritarian involution of imperialism, we can understand the creation of the Catalan problem as a tactical trick with profound strategic implications, which aims to make the state and fascist violence of the ultra-right minority acceptable to the majority of Spanish citizens. Sectors of the state, such as the army and the judiciary, in addition to important private institutions such as the Catholic Church, are controlled by fascist minorities, and the PP itself has within it a dominant faction of paramilitary or fascist character. The obvious intention of humiliating the Catalan institutions of self-government is a provocation to expand and make plausible the use of political repression, which has already been widely used to contain popular mobilization throughout the Spanish state.

Once the Basque problem was provisionally resolved, the Spanish state had run out of instruments to justify its antidemocratic policy and the curtailment of freedoms. The repression against the citizens' movement - through legislation that limits political liberties extensively - has not been sufficiently answered by a citizens' mobilization, but it must be understood as a defensive policy of the liberal monarchy, which in the current situation is in danger of remaining buried forever in the past of the Spanish state. The denunciations of corruption have put the conservative right on the ropes - see Irene Montero's speech in the motion of censure against the Rajoy government.

The coup against Catalonia – the state of emergency that is not declared, but real in practice – is an attempt to go on the offensive when the liberal instruments of political power at the service of the financial oligarchy have not yet

completely deteriorated.

The repression of the Catalan referendum seeks to give credibility to a conservative government which is completely discredited, as a guarantee of the unity of Spain threatened by Catalan separatism. It seeks to endorse its incompetence to the Catalan institutions, diluting its criminal image in the offensive against the enemies of the country. And remember that the condemnation of separatism was one of the slogans of extreme right-wing agitation in the years of the Second Republic, and one of the reasons alleged by the fascist army for the coup that led to civil war. This "Spanish unity" means the domination of the international financial oligarchy over the structures of the Spanish state and through it over their populations grouped in different national traditions. A domination exerted under delegation in institutions that have sufficiently demonstrated a huge degree of corruption and inefficiency in the political direction of our common affairs.

**Thesis 3: The correlation of forces achieved in Catalonia's political struggle and the resolution of this crisis will determine the democratic quality of the set of political structures in the Spanish state.**

The Catalan crisis is not yet a revolutionary crisis, and it is likely that it will not be given its regional character and the difficulties in involving the peoples of the rest of the Spanish state, even considering the current weakness of the latter. But it can be transformed into a permanent political conflict within the state arising from the Second Transition, which replaces the momentarily pacified Basque conflict.

The main contradiction to be solved by the liberal politicians must be clear: legitimizing the fraudulent domination of the financial oligarchy in a time of generalized crisis of late capitalism. And in that contradiction, they need to play with national feelings, setting some peoples against others. But the internationalism proper to the proletarian class cannot forget, at the risk of losing the battle for the future of humanity, that social realities as deep as national sentiment are not only masks of domination. In the national theme, the political hegemony of the working class, consisting of the necessary alliance with other social classes such as the petty bourgeoisie and the rural peasantry to build the historical republican bloc, is resolved.

The future configuration of political institutions in the medium term - perhaps another 40 years - will be determined by the result of political confrontation in the present social crisis (let's call it the Second Transition in parallel to the political process of the 1970s) and the correlation of forces that can be achieved in the Catalan political struggle. In these circumstances, betraying the democratic struggle of Catalan citizenship is tantamount to betraying the struggle for democracy in the Spanish state.

For what must be clear is that the struggle for democracy is not carried out against or in favour of an abstract state or an illusory identity, but against specific institutions of government, which are what determine the general orientations of social development. The laws of historical development are determined and unavoidable, the question is whether we can give them a definite orientation in an alternative to capitalist, authoritarian and corrupt leadership, which has become a monstrosity because of its social and ecological destructiveness. The struggle of social movements can change that direction to a very limited degree, which to this day seems insufficient because of the fascist drift of the NATO-led imperialist bloc societies. Fighting against this drift is the most decisive political line in the current historical conjuncture.

The liberal monarchy represents the domination of the international financial oligarchy over the Spanish population, but this domination is established to a degree determined by social cohesion and the capacity for self-organization of the people. The principle of self-determination is an instrument for the diffusion of political power towards citizenship and popular institutions, which must be exercised in the broadest possible manner in each historical moment. Only an authoritarian political regime can fear the free determination of the people; In this perspective, the 'ungovernability of democracy' is the neoliberal slogan to limit citizen rights.

### **Thesis 4: Solidarity with Catalonia defines the political struggle in the current historical conjuncture.**

The fact that the political dynamic leads to the most radical rupturist option in the popular republican camp has been denounced by sectors of the reformist left as a result of bourgeois manoeuvres. The absence of the working class in the independence struggle is an argument used by the reformists against the Catalan mobilization, without wanting to recognize that the passivity of the European working class and the concessions to neoliberalism by its political leaders are a direct cause of the rise of fascism in the imperialist countries. However, the working class has begun to mobilize against the repression unleashed by the conservative government in Catalonia. The class instinct can awaken in the face of the political events that are unfolding, reversing the tendency towards the subordination of the rampant fascist movements.

Otherwise, it is to be feared that the Spanish working class will slide towards a political process like the one that is developing in Europe. The political reformism of the neoliberal left has been incapable of offering an alternative of struggle to important sectors of the working class that are plunged into misery, and its defenders seem to regard increased capitalist exploitation as a necessary evil, or even as a curious social phenomenon. The European working class prefers to throw itself into the arms of fascism, rather than to endure the hypocrisy of those politicians who appear as the reformist crutch of the capitalist regime at a time when there is nothing to reform.

At this time, it is not a matter of locking into the debate between the options of independence (Yes / Yes, in terms of slogan) versus authoritarian *españolismo* (No / No), since there is a third possibility, accepting the referendum by voting against independence (Yes / No). This third possibility was defended by the parliamentary left, traditionally represented by IU with its proposal of the Federal Republic and nowadays by at least one sector of Podemos. However, the dynamics of confrontation in Catalonia makes this third middle way appear blurred. It is clear that the state power has manoeuvred to make it so, but it is also true that the IU itself has shown its inability to direct the social struggle born in the heat of the crisis. And while its reconversion through Podemos can solve the most serious organizational problems of the left in the past, it must also acknowledge its errors and take seriously its own political program, whose culmination lies in the proclamation of the Republic. And it is to be expected that after the events of Zaragoza on September 22 they will understand more clearly the seriousness of the situation. The defenders of a federal Republic must make common cause with the Catalan people against the repression of the state.

Solidarity with the Catalan process must be unconditional, although each must defend their own political positions with full awareness of their implications and seeking maximum coherence. The option to be applied will depend on the correlation of forces that occurs throughout the crisis, but in any case, the republican forces have no choice but to accept the challenge launched by the Spanish oligarchy, knowing that the fight is waged in worsening conditions for democrats and facing the repression unleashed against the peninsular and insular peoples under the Spanish state.

*Translation by **International Viewpoint** from **Viento Sur**, 28 September 2017 [“Cuatro tesis sobre la crisis catalana”](#).*

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