

# Spain's "Anti-Capitalist" electoral coalition: An anti-socialist trap for the working class

Alejandro López  
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The Anti-Capitalist coalition (Anticapitalistas) is standing in Sunday's general election in Spain. It was founded last month by Anticapitalist Left (Izquierda Anticapitalista—IA) and includes In Struggle (En Lucha), Internationalist Struggle (Lucha Internacionalista) and the Madrid Greens (Los Verdes).

IA is the Spanish section of the Pabloite United Secretariat. Like its international counterparts, the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France and Italy's Critical Left, the IA's roots go back to the 1953 split from the Fourth International led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel. The International Committee of the Fourth International was established to defend Marxism in 1953 against this tendency, which abandoned the struggle to build independent revolutionary parties in favour of seeking to act as a left pressure group on existing mass reformist and Stalinist parties, while promoting anti-Marxist ideologies within the working class. The Pabloites liquidated section after section of the Trotskyist movement around the world.

The other two parties in the coalition share a similar anti-Trotskyist history. In Struggle is the Spanish affiliate of the British Socialist Workers Party-led International Socialist Tendency (IST), and Internationalist Struggle is the Spanish section of the International League of Workers—both formed as breakaways from Trotskyism. The three organizations have come together in the Anti-Capitalist coalition to prepare a trap for workers and youth entering into struggle against the existing order just as Spanish capitalism is threatened with a financial meltdown that could make it next in line for the treatment meted out to Greece and Italy.

The aim of the Anti-Capitalist coalition is not to mobilise workers and youth to abolish the profit system and establish workers' governments as part of the United Socialist States of Europe. Its role is to promote a "no politics" protest agenda that is directed at preventing the construction of a genuinely revolutionary leadership based on a Marxist programme.

Its election manifesto focuses on the threat from neo-liberalism while promoting regulatory measures to "restabilise" the economy and balance the budget. Nowhere in its 76 pages does the word "socialism" appear.

The Spanish ruling elite recognizes the vital role such forces have played in dissipating the "indignados," or M-15 movement, which erupted earlier in the year. The daily

*Público* has promoted the coalition and its two figureheads. (The newspaper is owned by Mediapro, which was founded by Jaume Roures, a former member of the IA's predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League—LCR).

Miguel Urban, head of the Madrid Anti-Capitalists, is feted as the "young 32-year-old" who works for a non-governmental organization under permanent threat of losing his job and earns "no more than 900 euros a month." Esther Vivas, the Anti-Capitalists' candidate in Barcelona, has hardly been absent from news reports over the last few months (see, "Why is the Spanish media promoting Esther Vivas of the Anti-Capitalist Left?").

*Público* compares the Anti-Capitalists favourably to the discredited Communist Party-led United Left (Izquierda Unida), whose role as an adjunct of the ruling Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) has made it more difficult for it to act as safety valve for the capitalist system. *Público* believes the Anti-Capitalists "will try to catch the most radical votes on the left" and that their motto, "disobedience," goes further than Izquierda Unida's "rebel" and will "attract citizens discontented with the current system."

In reality, the Anti-Capitalists stood candidates against IU only after their overtures toward a common slate were rejected. They wrote this month in the Pabloite journal *International Viewpoint*: "Izquierda Anticapitalista held a discussion with Izquierda Unida and other groups about the possibility of a broad unified candidacy." Only after being rebuffed did IA come "to the conclusion that there was no real willingness by the leadership of IU to turn to the left in words or deeds."

Whatever their tactical differences, IA shares with the ex-Stalinists of IU the role of apologists for the labour and trade union bureaucracy. This is why, in all its criticisms of neo-liberalism, the manifesto has little to say about the PSOE government and the unions CC.OO and UGT, which bear the major responsibility for the prospect of the right-wing Popular Party returning to power on Sunday.

When asked if the Anti-Capitalists were Trotskyists or heirs of the Spanish POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista—Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), Urban answered that "some of our members like calling themselves [Trotskyist] and some not." He continued: "In Izquierda

Anticapitalista we define ourselves in many ways: eco-socialists, feminists, revolutionary Marxists, libertarians, communists, Guevaraists... we do not give much importance to these issues. The important thing is the program and the project we share.”

Urban then declared that it was “an honour to claim the memory of the POUM, a party that struggled for a socialist revolution during the civil war.”

Urban turns history on its head. In fact, the POUM contributed decisively to strangling the Spanish revolution, leading to the organisation’s destruction and the murder by the Stalinists of its leader, Andres Nin. The POUM’s role was to provide a left cover for the bourgeois popular front government. It emerged as the principal obstacle to the building of a party capable of leading the Spanish revolution to victory. This is the same role that the Anti-Capitalists are playing today.

The manifesto glorifies the “indignados” movement because of its lack of leadership and because it is “self-organized” and “represents itself.” It enjoins “the organizations of the left [...] not to interfere, not to hegemonise, not to represent the movement, but to participate loyally in it, providing capacities and proposals, to contribute to strengthening it, willing to learn every day from the actual movement itself.”

This is a fraud perpetrated by long-serving political operators attempting to cover up their real identity. The IA played a critical role in formulating the insistence on “no-politics,” “no leadership” and a “horizontal” structure—i.e., no challenge to the dominant politics of the labour and trade union bureaucracy, no analysis of the role of those who have contributed to the present crisis, and no possibility of developing the consciousness of the working class and youth.

IA leader Miguel Romera boasted, “We have been present at the rallies since the beginning. We have participated in the drawing up of the Manifesto. We have very good relations with the non-sectarian autonomous current, which is very present in the movement. In a general way, it is necessary to be very prudent and reserved, notably in relation to self-affirmation: flags, stickers, and so on.”

While demanding no politics and no leadership, the Anti-Capitalist manifesto is loaded with demands the “movement” should adopt. It is pervaded by identity politics, substituting gender, race and sexual orientation for class.

Nothing is said about holding the financial oligarchy to account for the criminal speculative activities that led to the global financial crisis. Instead, the manifesto merely calls for an “audit of private and public debt” to find out “how, in what conditions and for what purpose finance has been used to cause the public debt.”

Spain’s central bank should be strengthened to enable it to “comply with its obligations,” the document declares, adding that banks “that have participated in criminal activities or tax fraud” should be nationalised. The others should be more strictly regulated and financial transactions should be taxed.

These demands are no different to those being promoted by semi-official organizations like Attac, which have sought to persuade sections of the ruling elite to adopt forms of national economic regulation in order to prevent the development of a political movement against capitalism. Their objective is to insist that workers put their confidence in the nation state and its elite who, through pressure, can supposedly be made to act in the “national interest,” while accepting that working people take responsibility for “legitimate” debt.

The manifesto’s nationalist line continues with its failure to call for a United Socialist States of Europe. It advocates instead a federal republic with the right of self-determination for all the “peoples” of Spain. Put into practice, this would mean the balkanization of Spain into less viable mini-states based on reactionary nationalist and ethnic regionalism—each competing against the other to attract international finance capital.

In the Basque country, where separatism is strongest, the Anti-Capitalists criticise the so-called “left nationalist” party Bildu, which stood for the first time in May’s regional elections, winning 32 percent of the vote, only from the standpoint that it has failed to make “the slightest self-criticism of the neo-liberal policies that have been implemented by governments they were part of.” However, they refuse to stand candidates against the “left nationalists,” merely calling for a vote against those “who have supported wage and social cuts, etc.” This is a form of indirect support for the United Left Basque section, EzkerBatua-Berdeak (EB-B).

The manifesto calls for the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Afghanistan, Lebanon, Libya and the Horn of Africa and calls for a boycott against Israel. But it does not mention that in February, the coalition’s two leading members, Esther Vivas and Josep Maria Antentas, advocated “the political and economic international isolation of the [Libyan] regime and the unconditional supply of weapons to the rebels”—exactly what the European powers and the US did to carry out regime-change and install and colonialist-style puppet regime.



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