

# **Spanish State: “To change things we need to work every day in the struggles”**

Interview with Izquierda Anticapitalista (IA) candidate Esther Vivas

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**Esther Vivas was Izquierda Anticapitalista’s leading candidate in Barcelona in the elections that took place on November 20.**

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## **How do you evaluate the results for Izquierda Anticapitalista?**

Esther Vivas – I think the campaign we waged has been good, with an activist profile, raising the need to build a left alternative at the margin of the traditional parties. While it is clear that the results in number of votes have been very modest and well below what would be necessary in a context like the present. And yet many people prefer to “vote” for options such as Izquierda Unida (IU) or abstain, given the difficulty of an anti-capitalist choice such as ours, in obtaining parliamentary representation. Building an anti-capitalist alternative is a process that takes time and perseverance.

## **How do you feel about the so-called anti-capitalist left (in its various organizations) being once again outside of Parliament?**

Well, we were already in that situation! We know that elections are not neutral ground and are determined by money, media coverage and the institutional levers. Getting institutional representation is always difficult for the options which emerge from outside the party system. Opening an electoral breakthrough and getting anti-capitalist voices in the institutions to use them as a loudspeaker is not done in a day, it is a medium-term task.

## **There was some controversy (comments, articles and so on ) in the alternative press (Rebellion, Kaos, inSurGente, La Haine and so on) on Izquierda Anticapitalista’s position on what happened in Libya ... Do you support a “neither nor” position as many comments said ?**

It is not about “neither nor” but having political positions responsive to the complex realities and having a dialectical view of reality, without falling into “campist” positions to simplify things. The situation in Libya is characterized first by having a dictatorial and despotic government, an ally as well for the last decade of Europe and the United States, which therefore cannot be defended. Second, a rebellion against the regime led by sectors without credibility and not representing a left alternative. Third, an intervention by NATO and imperialism in order to bring about the fall of the regime and secure control of oil in the post-Gaddafi period. In such a scenario I think it is right from the beginning to support the popular rebellion, but without supporting the leadership of the rebel

forces of the Transitional National Council, and opposing the imperialist military intervention. More generally I think it is necessary to encourage all rebellions against despotic regimes in the Arab world and oppose the attempts, both of these regimes (or their remnants) and imperialism (by military or diplomatic means), to stifle the protests

### **Do you see significant differences between the PP and the PSOE?**

In the economic sphere the PP and PSOE basically defend the same policies that involve transferring the cost of the crisis to the workers and governing according to corporate interests. The Social Democrats, converted to social liberalism, have no agenda of their own for exit from the crisis different from that of the right. And while on topics such as family, sexuality, and so on, they take different approaches, the positions of the PSOE are subject to business interests. The alternation between PP-PSOE, and social conservatives and liberals that occurs in European countries has become an alternation similar to that of Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. In the end, regardless of who governs, financial capital is in charge. Another thing is that the social base of both parties is not the same and neither is the social perception of them.

### **Do you not have the feeling that the militant activity and demands of organizations such as IA is more important than the electoral channel?**

It is true that the election options such as IU, ICV and others have a strength that does not correspond to real social implantation or, even less, with their participation and involvement in the struggles. And, conversely, the groups most active in the social struggles have little electoral impact. It is precisely about trying to break this situation and not allow electoral representation to be the monopoly of forces with few links to the struggles or very supra-structural links.

### **IA had negotiations with IU on a joint electoral effort, why did they fail?**

IU convened various forces to talk about 20N. We drew up an "open letter" addressed also to the entire left. It argued that any unitary bid to the left of the PSOE should be based on a project with an anti-capitalist program, be linked to social struggles, ready to use its presence in parliament in favour of mobilisations, make a critical assessment of its past of governing with the PSOE (as in the case of the tripartite Catalan government) and, above all, be represented and embodied by activists, workers, the unemployed and not professional politicians. A proposal that would represent a new project, outside the conventional party system and would be an alternative. And we saw IU had another approach, different from ours. We believe that with forces such as IU we have to work on what we agree, in social activities where they overlap, and so on. But it is clear that we have different left projects.

### **What would you say to people who have voted IU, and even for the PSOE or Equo, thinking that they are revolutionary or left organizations?**

I would tell them to change things you need to work every day in the struggles and you do not change this world from the institutions, as clearly shown by history. And in an election it is better to support political organizations that have their centre of gravity in the street and not in institutions. To support organizations that do not make agreements with social-liberalism as others that you mention have done or are willing to do as evidenced by their sister organizations. But it is understandable that many people vote for these formations, but I hope that practical experience will break them from this. We should not blame anyone for supporting these forces, but persuade them of the need to make another choice.

### **How is it possible that when regional governments have taken so many unpopular**

## **decisions, the 20N did not get more votes?**

We must not forget that the majority of citizens did not vote for the PP in the Spanish State or CiU in Catalonia, and even fewer have voted for the cuts. The PP won the support of 30.27% of the electorate of the state, but this is only 0.97% higher than that achieved in 2008. In Catalonia, CiU won the elections with the support of only 18.8% of the electorate. You have to remember these figures against the mantra that says that the election results legitimize their policies of cuts. But we see that the right has a significant and solid social base.

## **Is it possible that one day there will be a broad Left Front that brings together all people who question capitalism from top to bottom? Do you work for this?**

We have the collective challenge of building an anti-capitalist alternative, as strong and broad as possible, which can have social impact. There are no shortcuts to this and there is a long way to go, but I think it is a shared will among many organizations, groups and individuals.

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**P.S.**

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