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Transitions, illusions, frustrations, and hopes

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ABSTRACT
Francoism was a brutal dictatorship, but it was not always that way. During the 1940s and 1950s, people in Spain lived under a dictatorship like that of other fascist dictatorships, in a civil war atmosphere of repression and terror. Society lived in fear and/or submission; resistant minorities were heroic, but they did not change the political regime. In the 1970s, some segments of society gradually began to lose their fear; the Spanish state no longer controlled social or daily life regarding the use of language; the fight of the trade unions grew despite State repression; universities and cultural spheres despised Francoism and, by the end of the decade, social demands and protests emerged in working-class neighbourhoods. In this context, the political cores—most of the left as well as nationalists—began to take root in the most critical areas of the regime and an 'agreed transition' became almost inevitable. Most of society did not want the Franco regime to continue, but they also feared a traumatic and violent change. The result was a formal democratic beginning. However, institutional Francoism was still present, for example, in the armed forces, the upper echelons of bureaucracy, and the Judiciary. Transition was the beginning of democratisation.

Keywords: transitions, resistance forces, society of fear and terror, myths and hopes, agreed and perverted transition.

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FROM RESISTANCE TO THE TRANSITION, BETWEEN REALITY AND ILLUSION, AND FEAR AND HOPE

"Resistance is hope," wrote René Char.[1] In Spain there was always resistance, in spite of [its] military defeat and the repressive massacre that started with the [Spanish Civil] War. Repressive terror was applied from the first days of the war; simple non-adherence to the uprising was sufficient to justify killing, with or without a judgment.[2] The 1940s and 1950s were years, not only of post-war and misery, but also of terror. [During this period] a totalitarian state was forged that

1 René Char (1907–1988), was one of the great poets and notable combatants of the German occupation (he was a group leader in the Maquis [in World War II]). Two of his books were written during the resistance: *Seuls demeurent and Feuillets d'Hypnos*. He participated in the initial foundation of Surrealism, alongside Aragon and Éluard (who later became communists) and Breton (something of a Trotskyist). After the war, Char—who was a republican and leftist—was opposed to Stalinist communism.

2 The fantastic gem [of a novel], *Los girasoles ciegos*, by Alberto Méndez, synthesises its beginning. [In it] an officer in the Francoist army surrenders to the Republicans close to the end of the war. When the Francoists later apprehend the whole group, he is judged for treason, thus: "Asked if the glorious achievements of the National Army are the reason for betraying the homeland, he replies: 'no, that the real reason is that we did not want to win then the war on the Popular Front.' [When] asked if we did not want to win the Glorious Crusade, [then], what did we want[?], the defendant responds: 'we wanted to kill them'".

implemented executions, long prison sentences, and torture at the first hint of any propaganda contrary to the political regime. Any act of opposition or show of support towards the those resisting [the regime], or any attempted social conflict was sufficient reason for arrest and sentencing. Collective fear and private refuge characterised Spanish society [at that time]. However, even in the 1940s there was armed resistance, and social and intellectual resistance in the 1950s. Most obviously, resistance came from the communists, but anarchists, trade unionists, Catholic and nationalist cells, and even dissidents of the dictatorship also resisted. Nonetheless, these were active minorities who found it difficult to influence society and whose support was precarious. A large section of the population, and broad sectors of popular society did not favour (or were extremely opposed to) the dictatorship, but were paralysed by repressive authoritarianism. Fear of the state, the government, and the military was embedded into the DNA of the Spanish people. In the 1960s and 1970s [this] totalitarianism cracked and lost its rigid control over a changing society, but the mark of terror, the Spanish Civil War, and political violence remained latent.

However, the active anti-Franco and leftist minorities, imagined a collapse of the dictatorship, a peaceful popular uprising, and an ideal democratic promise. A democracy as a prelude to social transformation and an advance towards socialism. When faced with the hardness of Francoism, the civil resistance generated comforting hopes. This was similar among the exiles who, each year, offered a toast that Spain would soon return to democracy.[3] The reality was more complex. While it is true that, from the 1960s, society was taking the weight of fascism and national-Catholicism—accumulated over the first two decades of the post-war period—off its shoulders. Rifts were opening in everyday life, cultural identity, university life, and among the intellectual elite; there were many limitations in the production of books and publications, in citizen and neighbourhood associations, to grassroots religious groups, and especially in factories and mines. An important trade union movement was even very slowly forged in the countryside in the 1950s within the official framework, and then more quickly in the 1960s, and with full autonomy with the *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO; the Workers' Commissions) [trade unions].

Society was creating spaces of freedom, but the dictatorial State maintained its huge capacity to repress and control the upper echelons and the reins of the political or para-political apparatuses, as well as all the public administrations, judiciary, armed forces, police forces, church, large media outlets, and business elites, etc. The relationship between these powers would make radical political change, from dictatorship to democracy, near impossible; turning the tides was not going to be easy or complete. Society began to express itself and this rallying potential became more fully developed in the 1970s. But the State maintained its coercive forces, and these did not tolerate anyone questioning the political system derived from the [Spanish] Civil War.

This was the reality. Society could not demolish the State at the time, but neither could this State regulate society. They were facing a model of an immobile state, with no more legitimacy against the resisting forces than mere fear and repression. Support for a democratic and social utopia was in the minority, but was growing. Society was largely the *public*, who aspired to a quiet democracy, without having to pay the cost for it. The social majorities were rooted in fear and viole *Gramscian consensus* nce; they felt alienated or impotent in the face of *politics*, and tended towards a passive. They were very pro-European and minimally (or anti-) revolutionary, with aspirations that were more liberal than those of the republicans. Hopes of democracy were taking root in Spanish society, although these were mixed with fears about the hypothetical violence, political emptiness after the death of the dictator, and (dubious) revolutionary initiatives. We must also bear in mind that the resistant leftists were

3 I remember how, in the Paris of the 1960s, when arriving at Christmas, exiles and even communist or anarchist leaders offered toasts of "next year, we'll all be in Madrid", or "in our villages". I was sceptical. This is the metaphysical background of revolutionary thought. As Marx would say, "religion is the opium of the people", but also "the sigh of the oppressed". It is the more or less utopian hope that gives [people] courage to resist the enormous superiority of repressive forces.

hegemonised by the communists, who represented not only their revolutionary future horizons, but who also identified with the other side of the Civil War. The communists were not strong enough to lead a majority anti-Franco regime, but they did generate fear in the passive majorities, and even among the moderate anti-Francoists, including the socialist leadership.

HOPES, FRUSTRATIONS, AND MYTHS ABOUT THE TRANSITION

Upon the death of the dictator, hope for democracy was galvanised, or at least, seemed possible. This hope entailed more or less explicit fears. The political leaders of the Franco regime did not have strong leadership or internal cohesion, but they were inserted throughout the whole State apparatus. Business sectors needed to integrate themselves into Europe, and this required them to invent a framework of formal democracy, even though they were especially sensitive to social conflict and weakening of the established order. The middle and popular classes, especially the generations that had lived through the war or the long post-war period of the 1940s and 1950s, had a deep-rooted fear of violence and repression. Social mobilisation multiplied very peacefully, and leaders and cadres of anti-Francoist parties and social organisations on the razor's edge were wary.[4] The democratising pressure was, in the long run, unbeatable, but the most visible aspects of the State apparatus [at the time] could only be dismantled peacefully, neutralised from within, and this required more or less explicit or tacit agreements. And so it was. The political reform law, which was not deemed acceptable by the anti-Francoists, was approved by 90% of the citizenship through a referendum, albeit under arguable circumstances, because in the absence of a legalised opposition, the government could still make itself felt by the majority of the population. Only the communists and the extreme left campaigned against it. The transition had started.

Thus, the door to the democratising process, the Constitution, and the vicissitudes of the process was opened. The initial plan [for the transition] was a half-half formula, or one with a very limited democracy, with a monarchy inherited from the dictatorship, very little social content, political parties that would alternate by means of elections but that would not question the agreed political bases and the capitalist economy, and with many reservations about the recognition of historical nationalities. Was the alternative was a democracy with a transforming republican vocation? One that would create the welfare state, grant the right to self-determination for all nationalities, and promote democracy at all levels of society. This is the alternative the active, resistant, and difficult-to-discourage anti-Francoists wanted; the 'limited reform' was not acceptable to the anti-Francoists and the 'desirable rupture' was not possible because it inspired fear and resistance from multiple sources. The logical result was to look for intermediate paths. The dilemma was between a 'democratising advance' or an 'authoritarian regression'.[5]

4 In January 1977, the murder of seven members of the main collective of labour lawyers who were linked to CCOO, had a huge electoral impact throughout the country. The assassins belonged to an extreme right-wing network which was openly linked to the most immobile sectors of the State, political, and military apparatuses. The CCOO and the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE; the Communist Party of Spain) had the intelligence to organise an extraordinary demonstration that occupied the entire centre of Madrid, without shouting or banners, and with a disciplined order, an impressive silence, and without a hint of violence. A demonstration of strength, but also of a willingness to declare a peaceful, de facto, agreed transition.

5 In the period between the Franco's death in 1975 and the elections that the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE; the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) won in 1982, there was a generalised sense, both among the political and economic elites and Spanish society as a whole, that at any time there might be an authoritarian and repressive political-military coup d'état. The legalisation of the PCE, terrorist offensives, rebirth of national identities, fear of reprisals for the multiple misdeeds of the Francoist apparatuses, and ideology of the military leadership, judiciary, and sections of the media and church that disdained democracy, created this feeling. While European governments tended to favour Spanish democratisation, albeit very discreetly, when the United States government, through its Secretary of State (the second in command of the Government) learned of the 1981 coup planned by the Civil Guard and military forces—who were holding hundreds of members of parliament hostage—simply stated that it was an internal matter for the Spanish state.

The first result was the Moncloa Pacts which were an agreement to immediate austerity and medium-term commitments, which were mostly unfulfilled. [6]ut the institutional political change was more than mere rebranding of the dictatorship; it was a real democratising beginning, albeit with limitations and ambiguities, that opened a process towards democracy. A key issue was the legalisation of political parties, including the PCE. Free elections were held and universal suffrage implemented. A potentially democratising constitution was drafted and approved, although it included brakes and possible retreats.[7] However, the transition began with more conservative resistance than democratising initiatives.

The agreed, peaceful transition, which had already started, then experienced a shock which had important consequences: the failed military coup in February 1981. This consolidated the imposed monarchy and legitimised it in public opinion (despite ambiguities about the [identify of] the head of state). The fear returned (if it had even gone) to broad sectors of society and the political class. Added to this, were the terrorist actions of ETA (an acronym for *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*—'Basque Homeland and Liberty') and the Government's dirty war. The centre-right dialogue started to dissolve and Suárez was eliminated from the game by his own party. From this, a conservative right emerged which was linked to the leadership of the church, army, State administration, and hard-line businesses. A worried PSOE, but one that also had a vocation for power, saw this as an opportunity to reinterpret [the terms of] the transition. The Ley Orgánica de *Armonización del Proceso Autonómico* (LOAPA; the Organic Law of Harmonisation of the Autonomic Process) was designed to reduce autonomy to a minimum.[8] Thus, neoliberal policies expanded under the government of Calvo Sotelo. The right, now in the process of reconstructing itself, had no chance of winning the elections and the PSOE appeared as the party that was willing to develop, and limit, the transition according to the interests of the powers at the time.[9]

The PCE was both victorious and defeated at the same time. It was the backbone of the anti-Franco resistance, the party of social movements and organisations; a champion of unitary policies, national reconciliation, the defence of political democracy, and the convergence between labour and cultural forces and the rights of nationalities. Above all, it represented the constructive and peaceful will of a large social and political block majority to end the dictatorship and create a progressive democracy. In the transition it adopted the commitments and pacts [necessary] to make the democratising beginning possible. But it was marginalised and its presence in the central institutions was minimal and almost symbolic. The electoral system did not help;[10] they only had access to

6 The austerity agreements favourable to business sectors affected workers ([e.g., in terms of] unemployment rates and [increasing] inflation without wage increases). Their counterpart [agreements], such as reindustrialising public policies, generating employment, and controlling banks and companies that had been liberalised and that had received aid, to a large extent, were not fulfilled.

7 An example is the Constitution's ambivalence towards nationalities. They are recognised as having a special status, which could even lead to federalisation or confederalisation, but it also proclaims that Spain is indissoluble and powers are limited to the control of central governments, which can even force autonomous governments to obey their requirements.

8 Almost all of the LOAPA was cut by the [Spanish] Constitutional Court, but abuse of basic legislation, the Court's duly amended sentences, and resistance to the transfer of power or resources, curtailed autonomous development.

9 The PSOE governments made progress with respect to individual and social rights (education and health) and the Workers' Statute was approved, but the large trade unions [such as] the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT; the General Union of Workers) and the CCOO organised large strikes because of the lack of public policies to generate employment and because minimum wages were not increased. Moreover, PSOE stopped promoting the democratic historical memory of anti-Francoism and halted the development of [different] autonomies and nationalities.

10 The sum of the provincial district [votes] and the Hondt law favour the two parties with the most votes. Thus, the PCE (which later became *Izquierda Unida*—the United Left), which was the third largest political force, remained a residual power. If the system were proportional, its strength would have been sufficient to make it a candidate capable of competing for government. Yet, even with half the votes, it barely achieved [the election of] ten times fewer deputies [than the leading two parties]. Even a party with a regional or national base, with ten times fewer votes, could duplicate its [number of] deputies.

local governments and, in a few cases, to autonomous governments. The activists of the PCE and the *Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* (PSUC; Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia), who had strong grassroots support among the working classes and in the intellectual and professional media, were frustrated and often sought scapegoats in Eurocommunism (democratic communism) or in [their own] leadership. Both parties were attacked both internally and externally, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, by the socialists and the political right, by the de facto powers and the media, as well as by the Soviets, who saw an enemy in Eurocommunism that delegitimised the USSR's authoritarian system and who felt denounced by the subjugation of the peoples of the Soviet bloc. Although their leaders encouraged members to keep their spirits high, the sum of frustrated hopes and the militancy's unfulfilled expectations provoked internal conflicts, ruptures, and splits. New, small splinter-group parties appeared that defined themselves as communists or revolutionaries, but these ended up confusing voters and so, in the large part, the electorate leaned towards a useful vote to the PSOE, or abstained. By the 1980s and 1990s [the PCE's] influence was very low, except in many local governments, the CCOO trade unions, in some intellectual and professional sectors, and some sociopolitical movements (e.g., at the periphery-level in neighbourhoods, and among ecologists, feminists, or nationalists).[11]

Successive PSOE governments (1982-1996) hegemonised the post-transition [period]. There could have been a second transition, or the incipient democracy (that had been stiffened as a formal superstructure to allow society to breathe, but which did not facilitate political participation or a reduction in inequalities) could have been democratised. Individual rights were gradually recognised and social policies were developed (including with the Workers' Statute and on education, health, and social protection). However, they also opted to deindustrialise, privatise, and release the reins of the financial system. Thus, neoliberalism permeated [Spanish] economic policies. The socialist political class and those around it became accustomed to representing the economic factual powers and the high levels of bureaucracy. The historical memory was censored and the political culture of the omnipotent repressive state and of national-Catholicism was replaced by a desire to earn money by whatever means, and the exaltation of consumption and individualism. PSOE, [which was now] the institutional left, created an image of a conservative and oligarchic democracy, which was complicit with, or subject to, the powers that be. This [image] was perceived by broad popular sectors [of society] and young people, including many who had voted for PSOE. But a huge opportunity had been missed: the second transition, the democratisation of a democracy in progress had quickly been perverted.[12]

It is well known that the transition was romanticised—an irritating historical falsification that spread throughout the world. The message was that everything was agreed between the political elites of the Franco regime and the opposition (most of whom had not fought Francoism during the dictatorship), while citizens limited themselves to being passive spectators. However, there had been social and political rallies, hundreds of deaths, and above all, an extraordinary democratic capital, accumulated over the many years of anti-Franco struggle. In recent years, a counter-myth about the transition has been built; a countermeasure that has been brought into focus by time and by the degeneration of the PSOE, and especially, by successive *Partido Popular* (PP; the People's Party) governments. Radical intellectuals, young 'movementists', and disappointed militants have denounced the transition. They consider it [to have been] a trap, a return to the past, or even a continuation [of the status quo] but [this time] in the absence of Franco; [to them] the braking and reversal

11 See Borja (2011; 2012).

12 The bibliography on the PSOE, the transition, and socialist governments is very large. See Molinero and Ysás (2010); Julià (1989); Riquer and Culla (1994). Also see the original work of Andrade (2012). The critical content of Gutiérrez's work (2015) is also significant, because it was written when he had just finished his term as a member of Parliament for the PSOE where he had held positions of responsibility, and after having been the CCOO's general secretary.

of the incipient formal democracy was a farce, and a betrayal of the leaders of the left.[13] It was a reaction to idolisation of the transition—the peaceful changeover, and oblivion of the struggle and repression, and [that] democracy [had been] reduced to the procedures of limited representation.

With very few exceptions, the political class, media, and numerous intellectuals and academics mythologised the transition, so that it was considered [to have been] peaceful and rigorous, promoting Spain's development and establishing the desired freedoms.[14] In turn, the protagonists—mainly the king, but also the political leaders—were also idealised. This image was projected to the rest of the world and also ended up consolidating the myth internally.[15] On the other hand, the counter-myth was explained as an agreement between a small group of detached characters or *traitors*. Here they agreed with the bearers of the 'angelic' myth. But the increasing social mobilisation of the 1970s was dispensed with and this made it extremely difficult to maintain what was the Franco-regime political system, in all but name. The counter-myth considered the transition as a quasi-continuation of a Francoist economy; [this was manifested in] the poor treatment of popular sectors and nationalities, in close connections with church elites, maintenance of a judiciary largely derived from the dictatorship,[16] failure to recognise social and democratic anti-Francoist struggles or the fierce repression of the republicans during the [Spanish Civil] War or the long post-war period. All of which, in part, was true; although, not quite.

A limited and frustrated democratising process was initiated, but it was accepted by the majority of society. It would be distorting reality to say that a continuity with the Franco regime was established, although it is true that the political culture was rife with traditionalist, Francoist, and techno-bureaucratic reactionism. A representative structure was built through universal suffrage, but individual votes were not equal; not only because of the electoral legislation but also, and more importantly, because the individual citizens were not all the same: let's say, *some were more equal than others*, because of [their access to] information, ability to use or manipulative means of advertising to different degrees, their support or financing of candidacies, and links between economic powers and political parties, etc.[17] Democracy is not limited to elections; there are other complementary ways of participating in politics such as maintaining accountability, popular legislative initiatives, consultations or referendums, civic management, etc. Democratisation involves

13 Subsequent political leaders, such as Juan Carlos Monedero and Julio Anguita (Anguita and Monedero, 2013), who accused the political leaders of the PSOE and the PCE of treason, know about (or should have knowledge of) the circumstances of the time. Felipe González never intended anything other than to promote a moderate bipartisanship, and Santiago Carrillo considered that the political change that would follow the Franco regime could not go beyond [that of] Western democracy.

14 PSOE placed itself centrally and in a position to be able to govern; they accepted limited democracy. The speech Felipe González gave on the electoral campaign that brought him to governmental leadership in 1982, synthesised his program: "a Spain that functions". A year and a half before, there had been a failed coup d'état, which frightened a large part of society and the political class. In some ways, the democratisation process had advanced socially, but not from a political or economic point of view. Something like the Argentinian 'two demons theory' ([the moral equivalence of] revolutionary guerrilla [violence] and [state-sponsored] military massacres) was applied, de facto. In Spain, republican victims and then the resistant militants were silenced, and the atrocities of the dictatorship and its accomplices—the military, police, church, corporations, etc.—were turned over.

15 The newspaper *El País* became the transition's voice and facilitated its idealisation. It helped spread the myth and legitimise the long regressive process of the previous twenty years. See Sánchez-Cuenca (2016).

16 An interesting example, derived from the attempted coup d'état of 1981, is the silence regarding the military leaders' policies. Repression was promoted by governments and legitimised by the judiciary, [for instance] by the 'gag law' and many other felony [laws]. Thereafter, those responsible for the military coup were put out of play or were silenced. The military chiefs formally declared themselves as professionals, and most of them, as constitutionalists. Although, when asked about the question of nationalities or plurinationality, they were very vulnerable.

17 Universal suffrage is an indisputable and indispensable democratic conquest, but it has its limitations. Citizens have individualised, serialised, votes, as Sartre wrote in 1971 in an article in Temps Modernes: "not within the framework of their social and political environment, in their organic sphere, [but] as active citizens or members of their social class."

transforming social and economic structures, which requires different ways of influencing political processes so that all citizens start to become increasingly 'equal' (Balibar, 2010; 2014).

MYTHS AND COUNTER-MYTHS: SEARCHING FOR NEW UTOPIAS VIA ROUTES THAT ARE CLOSER TO REALITY THAN MYTH

From angelic to demonised myths

The 'angelic' transition myth claims that the new democracy was exemplary, despite its anachronistic and authoritarian impositions: the monarchy, military demands, ecclesial privileges, and impunity for the dictatorship's criminals and those who abused power to enrich themselves. The myth that the king led the way to democracy spread. [In this narrative] he did this accompanied by the heirs of the previous system and soft opponents who were respectful to the established order, along with opposition parties that had had very little presence in the anti-Francoism movement, as well as candidates for leaders with the audacity to reach for the power that they did not have during the dictatorship: some liberals, some republicans, and quite a few socialists, most of them new-school. This myth took root in society and in international opinion. The PCE was marginalised; the hope was not to have to legalise it, but its dignified past of resistance, capacity for peaceful protest in the streets, and democratic moderation could have made it more dangerous outside than inside the political system.

Could the left-wing organisations that fought the dictatorship hand-to-hand have done more?

The only force that could have promoted an insurrectional mobilisation was the PCE-PSUC. In Madrid, Barcelona, and in large cities, industrial zones, and a lot of towns it is likely that they would have occupied town halls and maybe even factories and universities. But the other political forces—from the Franco-regime continuants, dictatorship reformers, to active and passive socialists—would have considered this to have been an attempt at a communist coup d'état and would have supported the repressive reaction, or at least, they would have looked the other way. It would have been political suicide. The militant left, with its communist hegemony, were not strong enough to impose a democratic transition like the ones instated in France and Italy in 1945; however, they were sufficiently strong to scare the Western bloc and a society that was more fearful than rebellious. The militant left-wing structures would have been liquidated or marginalised for many years. The material strength of the State was intact and, in addition, it would have acted on a basis of international and national *legitimacy*. On the other hand, we must not forget that the repressive vocation of State apparatuses was present in the collective conscious and unconscious.[18]

18 Here, let me exemplify the resistant activists' dilemma between participating in the tortuous process of the transition or forcing the ruptures that could overcome the limits of 'pactism', [at a timepoint] halfway between reform or rupture. In the 1970s I was responsible for popular civic movements and for municipal policies as a PSUC leader (I also worked closely with the PCE leadership in these areas). The *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD; the Union of the Democratic Centre), a centrist amalgam of post-Francoists (reformists or evolutionists) and conservative or moderate opponents won the first general elections in 1977. But the socialists and communists won in many large and medium-sized cities. The centrist government was in no hurry to call municipal elections because they did not [control] the local structures and the town councils were almost all governed by residual figures from the Franco regime or right-wingers with no political beliefs or social recognition. The PSUC management asked me to write a report on this. I stated that civic commissions had been created in many cities in Catalonia, alongside democratic political parties and social organisations [and that] occupation of the town halls and displacement of governors with minimal or no legitimacy was very feasible. Initially, the vast majority of our leaders supported this idea. However, both I and the Secretary General opposed this initiative. The latter reasoned that the democratising process had already begun [and that] they would have denounced us as undemocratic coup-plotters, marginalising us from the outset. For my part, I argued that this would create chaos in the municipalities: many high officials would not recognise the new authorities [meaning that] other parties (including socialists) would soon withdraw and thus we would be supported only by some social or citizen organisations. At minimum, this would most likely mean that we would get to the elections, but that we would be held responsible for paralysing local government and that it would probably cost us a lot of our social support. As far as I know, the PCE did not even consider it. Instead, we formed civic commissions to control municipal management and in the first local elections (1979) the left won in most large and medium-sized cities (in Catalonia and in other areas of Spain).

Was the transition a farce? In part, yes; it was a rose-tinted myth that considered what was only a limited democracy —more heir to the past than a builder of the future— to be a triumph. The monarchy was imposed, because in a referendum the republic probably would have won (as Suárez himself, the head of government, later acknowledged). The *indissoluble* character of Spain, a metaphysical conception, was demanded by the monarchy and the armed forces. Democracy was reduced to a set of procedures that represented the oligarchy. The social and economic dimension of democracy was never considered, and there was no recognition of the Republic of 1931, of the struggle and massacre of the republican people, nor of the anti-Franco battle.

But, in part, it was not a farce. Through the 1978 Constitution, a state model was built that restored the basic principles of liberal democracy, promoted individual rights and the political-legal equality of citizens, recognised historical nationalities, and left the possibility of social and economic transformations open. It was a starting point that could advance, both with respect to social and national rights. However, there was more regression than progress, mainly as a reaction to the attempted coup in 1981, and to *Partido Popular* (PP; People's Party) governments, beginning in the mid-1990s. At the beginning of the 21st century, Zapatero's socialist government initiated a second transition that was hindered by the economic crisis and PSOE's weakness.

Initially, the counter-myths were borne from the frustration of activists who had fought against the dictatorship and expected large political and social changes. But above all, [they came from] the rise of new generations that grew up after the transition (or later) who pitched more radical, ideological, and primary counter-myths which were more based on prejudice than knowledge. The positive parts of the transition and social and cultural public policies were painted as banal and considered basic. But the outrage, expressed in the so-called 15-M Movement (which started on 15 May 2011) and which was more than justified, came from a present-day reality offering no hope and that appeared scandalous—as seen in corruption, speculative enrichment, and ostentation of wealth.

The younger generations did not feel represented by the party system, the privileges of public office and their complicity with the economic powers, with [high] unemployment levels, and education and training not valid in the labour market; unlike previous generations, they felt futureless [in the face of] an economic crisis managed by the de facto powers. Thus, the negative myth of the transition framed it as a continuity of the dictatorship. Identifying the present state with that of the dictatorship, and devaluing it to the point of completely denying the elements of democracy it did represent, albeit limited ones. Franco-regime oppression was confused with the real injustices suffered by popular sectors, especially by minorities arriving from other countries. In summary: current institutions were rejected. Instead of discovering the contradictions of the political-economic system, very primal *new politics* were imposed (that were later put into context and connected with the positive elements of the anti-Franco resistance) which absolutely condemned the 'black' reality, when in fact, it had been 'grey' all along.[19] Thus, the counter-myth was an idealised construction, more invented than analysed, more prejudiced than rigorous; it obscured the real world, made of conflicts, conquests, regressions, hopes, failures, and progress.[20]

The generalised denunciation of the confused political class was not only ineffective (what happens if you get "everyone to leave"?), it may have also been wrong and unfair. All the political parties [involved] in the perverted [version of the] transition have been demonised. The political class, including both the socialist and communist

19 An example of the ambivalent nature of institutions are local and regional governments. In many cases, especially at the local level, numerous different political experiences (e.g., social, environmental, cultural, urbanistic, economic regeneration, citizen participation, etc.) have been developed. Therefore, groups of young people have experienced the possibilities of engaging with local governments and implementing innovative policies.

20 The theoretical-political foundations of the new policy were as nice as they were simple. Instead of analysing the contradictions and different types of conflict, the policy was based on the elementary empowerment of collectives in extreme situations and which are expressed through intermittent social movements, and offering them abstract alternative models adorned with the radical metaphysics of Laclau or Negri. A mixture of soft anarchism and angelic neoliberalism.

leaderships, was accused of being "traitors",[21] protagonists in a model of state and economy at the service of big money and complicit in the apparatus inherited from the previous state. But the vast majority of society considered Spain to have a young, undeveloped democracy similar to that of other European Union countries, albeit with an authoritarian hangover and a poorly-educated political class. The social majorities did not consider the political system as a mere continuation of Francoism, and accepted, with relative patience, the immature and underdeveloped democracy. But over the years, with shallow politics, and the terrible management of the economic crisis at the beginning of the century, the malaise, social outrage, and rejection of the political class became generalised. The counter-myth was reborn and took root, especially among generations born after the transition. It was a stepping stone from which the new policy could be promoted, and it gave rise to a new and modest mobilising utopia. However, the political project was missing; a strategy that would confront reality and organisation and which could take root in society and in institutions.

POLITICAL IMMOBILITY, POSSIBLE NEW HORIZONS IN THE SEARCH FOR REAL POLITICS, AND A STRATEGY THAT BRINGS US CLOSER TO UTOPIA

The eruption of the new political forces—*Podemos*, *En Marea*, *Catalunya en Comú*, *Coalició Compromís* (translated as We can, En Masse, Catalonia in Common, and the Commitment Coalition, respectively), etc.—has refreshed the stagnant water of Spanish institutional policy. In this context, past (especially the conservative-liberal triumvirate) and present governing political parties are still making waves, and current socialist leaders are now also starting to wade in. Pure words. Nothing changes. They make promises, but do nothing. They appear in the media but fewer and fewer citizens believe them. Although they are only throwing stones in the form of condemnations and proposals that connect with citizens and the demonstration of some sensitivity and conviction, it is enough for the institutional old-guard to express their fears and rejections. That is why they threaten *gag laws*, claim [the results will be] catastrophic if these new political forces come to power, and unite to entrench themselves in armoured state apparatuses. To paraphrase Borges, "They are not united by love but by terror."[22]

The transition and its counter-myths are one of their reasons for being. However, these eruptions by indignant youth do not come from anti-Francoism: they did not live through it and they have known little, or nothing, of it; they can barely understand the transition. The facts are known. But the relationships [between the] forces, the more or less explicit threats, or the stillness of a large part of society are difficult to understand or imagine. However, these generations had (and have) reasons to denounce what was done or not done during the transition. [To them, the transition's] positive aspects were already complete: part of their *natural* environment; now we are paying the cost of anything not done, or that was left incomplete. The transition's result was not as expected. It was perverted by the monarchy, ruling political leaders, judiciary, senior administration, and, in general, anyone who enjoyed power and privilege in one way or another.[23]

21 See, for example, the previously mentioned book-dialogue between two serious characters, who are neither leftists without political experience, nor young radicals: Julio Anguita and Juan Carlos Monedero; the former, the ex-secretary general of the PCE, and the latter, the founder of Podemos and one of its main leaders during its early years. Monedero begins the book by accusing PSOE and the PCE of being "traitors", and insists until Anguita accepts this label. In a recent interview in *El País*, Alberto Garzón, the leader of the United Left, made a similar irrelevant and surprising statement, directing the infamous accusation of treason at the PCE's leadership. Garzón has been, and in my opinion, is, an honest and sensible politician, but his statements can only be explained as childish opportunism.

22 Borges wrote, referring to port-dwellers, "We are not united by love but by fright", in the poem 'Buenos Aires' from the 1964 book *El otro, el mismo* (Borges, 1998).

23 An example is the Constitution and its ambivalences. It recognises nationalities, but starts badly with the absurd Article 2 that declares, very metaphysically, "the unity of the Spanish Nation, common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards." To which, a distribution of competences is added, although the central power controls all those that it considers of "national interest", and it can develop "basic laws" that, in practice, cancel any [devolved] decision-making powers. On the other hand, Article 9, point 2, legitimises all social and political transformations that can "remove obstacles that impede or hinder the fullness (of freedom and equality) and facilitate participation in political, economic, cultural and social life."

Consequently, the transition was not what it could have been. There was no second transition because, although social policies were developed and some individual political and civil rights were promoted, there was a regressive interpretation of nationalities, democratic public control of economic activity, and the recovery of historical memory. The frustration of the generations who were adults during the transition had both costs and benefits: rights were supressed but, these were, partly, more formalities than anything else. Subsequent generations have lived through a grey present and the future proposed to them is worse than that of their parents. The transition [is the sum of] was what was done and how it played out; it is possible that it was not what it could have been. It makes no sense now to fight over the past, or to propose *another* transition; the reality now is different and affects not only the younger generations, but also the whole of society. It is about democratising the [previously imposed] limited and perverted democracy.[24]

Is this a new transition, or rather, a democratisation promoted by new generations? Yes, but not only that—although the [new generation] must take the leading role. Other actors, in many cases intergenerational ones, are also present. Moreover, it is not only about recovering what [the transition] seemed to be (but was not): democratisation of the country and its institutions at every level, recognition of nationalities, recovery of democratic memory, and real access to democracy for the popular sectors. It is also about combating the speculative economy, growing inequalities, political corruption, degradation of labour rights, and progressive dissolution of cities submerged by dispersed urbanisation and lost citizenship. What was not done in the past or that has been degraded in the present have become intermingled, as is also the case with different generations.

A democratic challenge expressed, for example, by the Catalan movement: an impressive mobilisation that has been maintained as a result of the [Spanish] Constitutional Court's provocative, absurd, and unnecessary sentence in 2010, which has even contributed to the independence movement supported by almost half of the citizenship. The Catalan rallies have put the political regime in check, but at the same time, the strength of the independence movement hinders an alliance or convergence with the democratising processes in Spain. We must bear in mind that the Spanish government's constitutionalist triarchy: the PP, *Ciudadanos* (C's; Citizens), and PSOE, are incapable of dialogue and are opposed to any consultation; they multiply their threats, belittle Spain's plurinationality, and have greatly contributed to the accelerated growth of the independence movement. The existence of Podemos and political movements in peripheral countries [regions or autonomous communities] of the Spanish state can contribute to drawing the Catalan movement closer. As a nation-wide political force throughout Spain, Podemos' recognition of the national plurality makes it a potential alternative to the right. The emerging political movements that affirm national identity are more plurinational than they are pro-independence, but they all have a democratising and pacifist vocation. Some nationalist political forces have appeared, others have renewed themselves or defend their identity and self-government and express both cultural and socioeconomic grievances. Not only in Catalonia and the Basque Country, but also in the Valencian Country, Galicia, Aragon, and Navarre, and to a lesser extent, in the Balearic and Canary Islands. However, in Catalonia the independence movement, which represents half of the population, has become radicalised. The other half of the population is divided between those opposed to independence and those who are doubtful, indifferent, or whose position depends on how the Spanish government acts.

There is a relatively new challenge that, because of its complexity and contradictions, may or may not be a democratising factor. We refer to the working classes, whose main historical base has been the labour movement and influx of immigrants from other

24 There was a beginning to democratisation, and also processes of democratisation. Re-democratisation questions the political regime. There are historical moments in which democracy is confronted with the existing political-legal framework. See Borja (2015; 2017).

continents. The relative weakness of the unions and dispersed political stance have, until now, prevented it from expressing itself as a socio-political bloc in the political arena and in terms of social conflict. The working classes vote to the left and to the right, and many abstain. The poorly labelled 'immigrant population'—in reality, these are residents, some with [Spanish] nationality, others with a legal status, and still others without papers—forms a large part of the precarious [population] who have poor union membership rates and rarely actively participate in political life. While these popular sectors are not fatally attracted to the extreme right, nor are they massively attracted to the new or reinvented left. The PCE lost them long ago when it was badly damaged, and since then PSOE has been losing them along its painful journey from moderate left to demagogic and conservative centrism. Podemos and its allies, including the *indignados* (the 'outraged') and post-communists, represent political forces with unquestionable progressive orientations, but their activist and electoral base is more middle class than popular and working class. Its challenge is to reach these classes, which requires patience, organisation, and political proposals that generate a lot of confidence and some enthusiasm.

Coupled with PSOE's current regrettable leadership, the ultra-conservatism of the triumvirate led by Rajoy's PP on the one hand, the persisting economic crisis on the other (although some export and tourism sectors have experienced a recent relative energisation), is providing the new middle and popular-class political forces with an opportunity. The economic crisis that began in 2007–2008 and the barbaric policies of neoliberal austerity generated strong social movements such as the tides of health and other public services that were privatised; the anti-eviction platform, which was supported by the vast majority of citizens; demonstrations against banks and financial entities; and workers' strikes against dismissals, labour reforms, and wage reductions. Despite the growing [number of people in] precarious [situations] and high unemployment rates, there has not only been some economic reactivation, but also [increased] union [activity], which can be reinforced by the presence of new political forces.

The popular resistance generate threats and politically and judicially repressive actions, which are most obviously present at protests, strikes, and campaigns. Or illegal police controls. The sharpest expression of this has been the gag law,[25] and corruption, which mainly affects the PP and the right as a whole, although PSOE and the Catalan centre-right were also troubled by this problem, added to the situation. Scandals about privileged elites have multiplied over the last decade, just when a large part of the population became impoverished, many SMEs (small and medium enterprises) went bankrupt, many professionals closed their offices, and unsalaried unemployment levels reached 25% of the active population. This, in the context of tax evasion, [the identification of] large fortunes of unknown origin (in many cases, linked to corruption and speculation), and managers of financial institutions and large companies receiving salaries and other emoluments sometimes a hundred-fold more than those of an average worker. Corruption reached the royal family, the PP and all of its ruling party, and has generally affected both economic and political leadership in Spain. Young people felt excluded from the game and considered themselves to be marginalised from institutions and political parties; they lack confidence and hope, and the oldest among them longed for the times when they still believed in the future. The emergence of new political movements brought new hope. However, corruption is currently causing more social demoralisation than political reaction. But, in this enormous malaise, these renewed political forces may find a citizen response that could turn around this catastrophe.

25 A law promoted by the Ministry of the Interior that avoided sanctions by administrative means and without judicial intervention. The exorbitant fines, just for having signed a political declaration or a call for a rally or demonstration, could leave the signatory indebted for many years. The Ministry of the Interior has used judges and the police as accomplices in a dirty war against its political opponents, activists, and critical intellectuals [on many occasions].

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we hope for a political renewal that can break through the disastrous immobility of the past 20 years. The movement of the *indignados* was more than just a moment of effervescence; it was an accelerated process of political socialisation by the generations that were born and grew up in the 1980s and 1990s. They have lived in a framework in which the 'good' had already been conquered and was deteriorating, and where the 'bad' grew and especially affected them. Although they were not the only ones; far from it. Others have lived through this and now live in worse conditions: immigrants, the elderly, and unemployed (who in many cases will never again find an occupation). The social and cultural base of Podemos and its allies can resist, mobilise, develop alternatives for education and family support, and [help to] alleviate the accumulated fears [of voters]; they come from the middle classes and from families of skilled workers—in many cases from those with combative [political] pasts.

But these groups suffer from three limitations: (1) Ignorance and, often, disinterest in the past; they [often] have a sense of Adamism about them, as if history began with them, and they show a certain negativity about political and social practices, as if everything were disposable. (2) They are limited by the heterogeneity and coherence of their political culture; they denounce the effects of political and economic life, scandalising its privileges and exclusions, but not only do they have common interpretive bases (such as liberalism or Marxism), but they also ignore the mechanisms of politics, parties, and institutions. They find it difficult to specify possible and reliable political projects, however, reformation means influencing the existing political and economic systems, because nobody wants a classical revolution. (3) Finally, typical of emerging social movements—in many cases discontinuous minorities—their organisational experience is limited. As new social movements, they are run by assemblies and spokespersons, however, this does not correspond to [experience in] mass organisations (civic or professional unions) or [political] parties; their awareness of the functioning of institutions, agreements, use of the political-legal and financial framework, elections, and especially, re-elections, etc., is even lower. This is not a criticism, but rather, a call for these movements to mature, to structure themselves for large-scale politics, and to stop producing prototypes that cannot be generalised.

The positive novelty is that the initiative and its leadership correspond mainly to *young people* (or who at least seem or consider themselves to be young), to those aged under forty years.[26] They have imagination, use fresh language, and [talk about new] initiatives, etc., but they forget about how reality resists. Resistance is mainly put up by citizens of the middle and popular classes, for several reasons. There is [often] concern among these social majorities about security and stability, and a fear of conflicts and big changes. There is a conservative reserve with distant fears, [they search for] a calm present, and if possible, certain futures. Thus, political alternatives must bring some measure of security [and must] demonstrate that insecurity, uncertainty, and unrest will increase by sticking to current policies executed by the same actors. The old political parties had nothing to offer that was not more of the same. Therefore, these new political forces emerged; but the old ones (which, incidentally, are only 30 or 40 years old themselves) are still very present in society and are very well

26 This young political generation has mythologised new politics and has broken away from old politics. It is partly true that political parties are locked up inside the glass prisons of the parliaments and other institutions that are inaccessible as they are opaque. The freshness of language and assembly culture belongs to social movements. But when considering intervention in other dimensions of politics, they must greatly expand their political and organisational culture. We refer to mass organisations (such as syndicates, unions, trade guilds, civic associations, etc.) that are the sum of their members; to political parties, which stand for elections and must convince diverse sectors, whose militants sometimes have quite diverse interests or ideologies; and the functioning of institutions and other political forces, which put up bureaucratic resistance, to modify their inertial and non-transparent behaviour. Above all, agreements are required to make decisions, approve standards, or promote initiatives. We must also assume the limitations imposed by legal and financial frameworks, public opinion, pressure from social or union groups, etc.

established in its institutions. Some can be rejected; others may be decent opponents or relatively reliable allies. Only one detail is missing: we must reach the social grassroots, achieve cultural hegemony, and build a political force capable of winning elections. No more, no less.

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