



Panel: What to Do in the Face of the Resurgence of Fascism and the Extreme Right

The table was moderated by Sociology professor **Andrés Piqueras Infante**, who presented the subject and the other participants: first of all, the antifascist activist (Almería Popular Solidarity Network) **Cristian Larios Rodríguez**, who stressed the importance of popular antifascism permeating everyday society, not as groups of hooligans squaring off against the other extreme. Rather, he underscored, efforts must be made to contribute to the solidarity and empowerment of the masses against the mechanisms of capitalism, for which he pointed to the importance of social awareness amongst antifascists, and a renewed class consciousness, which has largely evaporated. According to Larios, antifascism is part of a struggle against the capitalist system.

Kate Hudson, a member of the leadership of the European Left, alerted us to advances by the extreme right and its values at the international level, as this is an era characterised by figures like Donald Trump, and his American and European counterparts, such as Bolsonaro, and the leadership of Golden Dawn in Greece. The importance of this ominous resurgence spurred them to consider holding, in March 2021, a Congress to analyse this resurgence of fascism in the midst of the global economic crisis and pandemic. The name chosen, *¡No pasaran ! (They Shall Not Pass!)* pays homage to the Spanish antifascists of the 1930s who waged the first great battle against fascism, as it will strive to bring together today's main anti-fascist resistance movements. Those working to keep alive the memorialist demands of La Desbanda are, thus, invited to join

Luis Suarez Carreño, with the association La Comuna, defined the main objectives that said association pursues, including the recognition of Francoist prisoners in the face of impunity, raising social awareness of the recent past, and the dissemination of and participation in social activities and mobilizations related to human rights both yesterday and today. He argued that current Spanish society is mired in a kind of collective amnesia, defenceless before the spread of a version of history sympathetic to Francoism. The young, ignorant and depoliticized are vulnerable to extremist strains of populism. He made reference to Professor Enrique Javier Díez Gutiérrez's *La Asignatura Pendiente (The Unfinished Task)*, which reflects how a whole cover-up mechanism has been developed, based on silence, fear and whitewashing imposed by the dictatorship, with this also affecting textbooks, in which sensitive political topics are either tiptoed around or completely ignored.

He pointed out that the effects of this glossing over and counteroffensive are real, and are particularly present in Madrid, where he highlighted the recent changes in the nomenclature of the city's street map, the intervention at the city's Eastern Cemetery, the vandalism of the monuments to Largo Caballero and Indalecio Prieto, and the criminalization of anti-Franco militants, even in the Parliament.

According to Luis Suarez, neo-fascism is a rehashing of the old fascism, disguised as democratic, pointing out that there are museums of all kinds throughout the country, but hardly any dedicated to democracy and human rights. He quoted Iratxe Momoitio Astorkia, Director of the Guernica museum, who stated that "We are the education they give us, the television that we watch, and the museums that we visit".

In Suarez Carreño's view, it is necessary to establish the connection between the old struggles for the rights of the past and those for the rights of the present, the gag law, the loss of rights, repression, and reductions in freedoms.

The Democratic Memory, based on the primacy of democratic rights, disappears if it does not have interpretation centres, coverage in classrooms, memorials and anti-racist legislation that expose cases such as Granado, Puig Antich and many others.

Finally, the speaker addressed what to do in the face of the rise of fascism, sending a clear message: "wake up!"

Manuel Ruiz García (Association of Victims of the Transition) focused his remarks on the actions carried out to prosecute Rodolfo Martín Villa for his responsibility for the death of close to 100 anti-Franco activists while he was Minister of the Interior.

After running up against the wall of the Spanish justice system, he managed to have Martín Villa tried in Argentina, in 2014. The 1977 Amnesty Law and the "Regime of '78" constitute shields for Francoism and part of the Transition. Finally, he paid tribute and gave thanks to the recently deceased Chato Galante, as a paragon of an anti-Franco activist.

In his remarks **Ángel del Río Sánchez** (Amical Mauthausen) addressed the importance of pedagogy as an antidote to fascism. He spoke of how, throughout his experience as an educator, the prior knowledge of young students is scarce or null, and those who know something do so thanks to cinema, documentaries, television or their family's accounts.

Neoconservatism seeks to cover up the past and stifle knowledge, which is why he pointed to education as a vital vaccine against fascism, speaking of how, in his experiences in Seville, taking young people to the Canal de los Presos, the irrigation channel built by political prisoners, and explaining the existence and location of concentration camps, engenders anti-fascist concern and outrage in them. He also talked about experiences in Granada with visits to the Viznar and Alfacar ravines, sites of mass shootings and burials perpetrated by Francoist forces, as well as other sites in Andalusia. Finally, he asked, in the face of the rise of VOX, is pedagogy useful? He concludes that it is, pointing out that students quickly draw parallels between the past and the present.

Francie Cate Arries (Modern Languages & Literatures, College of William & Mary, Virginia USA) shared with us how the Cádiz memorial movements have evolved from their initial aims, seeking justice for their ancestors, to the broader internalisation of democratic values, leading them to embrace Cadiz's democratic struggles today, in the defence of feminism, transgender rights, environmentalism, migration, Marea Azul (water issues), and others. She concluded by

underscoring that understanding the past easily leads to a heightened consciousness of the present.

And, with no more questions to answer, the session concluded.

Editor: **Fernando Díaz Haro**