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Responses to a questionnaire submitted by Álvaro Hilario in connection with the new Spanish edition of Manuscript found in Vitoria

Miguel Amorós

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Álvaro Hilario submitted this questionnaire to Miguel
Amorós on behalf of the Basque daily newspaper, *Gara*.
Translated from the Spanish from a copy provided by Miguel
Amorós in April 2014.

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Álvaro Hilario: By the end of the seventies, the western European working class was finally defeated. The situation was no different in the Spanish state after the conclusion of the 1976 strike wave. In that context, the political superstructures of the state were converted from dictatorship to democracy. The “Manuscript...” begins with a paraphrase of a quotation from Donoso Cortés who said that, “when dictatorship is not enough to guarantee [the Spanish bourgeoisie’s] control over society, then democracy”.

Miguel Amorós: *The battle of Poland had yet to take place, but yes, one can say that since the end of the seventies the recession of the traditional working class has proceeded relentlessly. Capitalism was victorious on all fronts and was preparing to engage in restructuring itself on new foundations. The democratic*

reconversion of the Spanish dictatorship had no other purpose than to facilitate this victory in the Mediterranean zone.

Álvaro Hilarío: This defeat appears to have two sources: on the one hand, the pressure of the reactionaries, associated with the opposition (parties and trade union bureaucracies); on the other hand, the errors committed by the workers assembly movement. The following quotation can shed light on this question: the Workers Commission of the factory of Forjas Alavesas who went on strike on January 9 wrote, in its analysis of the struggle, “There is no better way to resolve the conflict than disarming one side. We have returned to work without achieving our aspirations. First, because the machine guns forced us to do so. And, secondly, we had disarmed ourselves, by deeming the assembly to be the fundamental weapon.”

Miguel Amorós: *In fact, one could attribute the defeat not just to the unity of Francoism and the political-trade union opposition, but also to the strategic weakness of the assembly movement itself, which was both incapable of reacting promptly against the attacks of all its enemies and unable to protect itself with clandestine methods, a weakness that was aggravated by the repression and internal sabotage of the assemblies, and by the persecution of their militant supporters.*

Álvaro Hilarío: The text recounts how the movement was incapable of shifting the struggle onto its own terrain and extending it because, among other factors, it did not carry out the necessary task of occupying the liberated spaces and destroying the power of the state and the oligarchy. It did not take into account “Bakunin’s famous formulation, ‘the urge for destruction is a creative passion’.”

Miguel Amorós: *The order to open fire on the workers that was issued by Fraga caught the movement unprepared, as it was not expecting a tragedy of that magnitude. This had a major demoralizing effect, and it was followed by a generalized disorientation. No one knew what to do. As a result, many of the militants of the assemblies, without denying the role of the as-*

or creating jobs, a total fantasy. They do not speak of the “right to be lazy” or of “free employment”.

Miguel Amorós: *The wage worker is the keystone that upholds the entire system of domination. All the defenders of the established order are defenders of labor. And all those who suffer under this order need to work in order to survive. “Employment” is the carrot of power that determines the submissive attitude of the exploited towards exploitation.*

Álvaro Hilarío: Finally, regarding the new edition of this book—can it be useful in helping struggles to reorient themselves in time and space, so that the revolution will begin where it once left off?

Miguel Amorós: *Reading a text that offers a realistic view of a crucial moment of the class struggle of the past has never been more necessary, especially if you want to address the present from a historical perspective, for finding the lost road of revolution.*

sembly, leaned towards participation in the trade unions and legislative bodies, in order to prevent such a bloody battle from ever happening again. Others thought that the scale of the task implied by a revolutionary assault against the state was far beyond the capabilities of the currently existing forces and their level of preparedness, and inclined towards hybrid formulas that were accommodationist with respect to the new political and trade union status quo. As for that quote from Bakunin, you have to consider it in its context, which was that of the philosophical-political disputes among the Young Hegelians. Destruction (of the old) and creation (of the new) is a play of dialectics that has history as its stage. Passion is the subjective and unconscious instrument of the creative spirit that is on the verge of reaching new heights with the social and political transformations triggered by the French Revolution, proof of what Hegel called the ruse of Reason. It is by no means a call for insurrection or vandalism.

Álvaro Hilarío: Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Vitoria... Buenos Aires only a little more than ten years ago, when the state and the political-economic beast were discredited, the people returned, but a time came (defined as the seizure of power, creation of counter-power, etc.) when they did not know what road to follow and capital reconstructed its framework, assimilated dissidence and once again enjoyed legitimacy.

Miguel Amorós: *It is not enough to know what you do not want; you have to know what you want and you have to be ready to undertake all necessary measures to put that knowledge into practice. But the mere enumeration of missed chances is of no use. Each of the revolts you mention was unlike the others, mobilized different forces and their relative degrees of failure were due to a combination of different factors. Each conflict creates an unstable situation of dual power in which victory goes to the side that is most resolute and capable of rapidly putting all of its available forces onto its side of the balance.*

Álvaro Hilario: The current situation. How to interpret it, what direction the emancipatory anti-capitalist struggle should take.

Miguel Amorós: *The anti-capitalist struggle has to dump the ballast of obsolete ideas inherited from the past, especially those that claim to be modern, which drag the struggle like a dead weight down to defeat. There is no worse enemy of the struggle than ideologies, veritable secularized religions that obscure awareness of reality and lead the struggle into dead ends. The struggle must create zones for both free reflection as well as free experimentation in order to counteract their influence.*

Álvaro Hilario: The seventies and the workers defeat constituted the beginning of another turn of the screw in the development of capitalism and the international division of labor, in accordance with the same logic of the laws of capital but with the invaluable assistance of the stunning technological advances in the field of communications.

Miguel Amorós: *The world is more and more being transformed into the world of the commodity, of finance, of the state. Technology has become the main force of production, upon which globalized capitalism relies to resolve its production problems, and the mass of wage laborers has become the main force of consumption which makes possible an increasingly extended accumulation of capital.*

Álvaro Hilario: On the other hand, and returning to the preceding item, in western societies, the working class as such disappeared (the passage from the mass worker to the social worker) and, over the last twenty years, the working class has been stratified into different groups that do not identify with each other at all. The material stages where the struggle took place have also disappeared (factories, neighborhoods) and society remains silent, apathetic, and seemingly satisfied.

Miguel Amorós: *The industrial workers does not comprise the majority of the wage-earning population in developed capitalist societies, and they can no longer be defined as a class except*

from the strictly economic point of view, but not political or social. Conflicts have not disappeared, however; what is happening is that they are taking place on other stages: the suburban zones, the territory.... The protagonists are not the same ones as before; history has retired them. The new revolutionary agents are born from the ruins of the previous stage.

Álvaro Hilario: More than thirty years have passed since the last episode or cycle of workers struggles, since that last turning point in the development of capitalism. In the Spanish state the changeover, the transition and its lie worked almost without a hitch. Today, however, despite the support enjoyed by official history (as we have seen with the whole campaign generated around the death of Adolfo Suárez), cases of political corruption, whether involving the Bourbons or the collapse of the speculative model, cause the outbreak of struggles. It seems, in my opinion, that they are led by the “disinherited”, that is, by young people who, however else you want to characterize them, have no chance of being integrated into the system and/or the labor market.

Miguel Amorós: *We have undergone a long phase of consumerist resignation that has corrupted the minds of the wage earning majority. The system displayed an extraordinary capacity for integration whose results endure even when conditions of commodity prosperity have disappeared. The economic crisis which has put an end to the consumerist complacency does not appear to have entailed significant changes in the way those who are no longer so integrated think and act. Only those who were not corrupted by money and politics because they opted for marginalization and resistance, and those recent arrivals whom the system now marginalizes because they cannot be incorporated into the market, have anything to say.*

Álvaro Hilario: Continuing with our discussion of today’s situation, it is curious that the trade union bureaucracies and the parties persist in issuing slogans that speak of preserving