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# Interview with Ruta 66

## Nostalgia for rock can be a weapon in the struggle

Jaime Gonzalo

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He is not an expert on rock music, but he wrote a very revealing socio-political analysis that rescued rock n' roll's revolutionary dimension from oblivion. A powerful critical voice, well-versed in anarchism and situationism, under his outward appearance of a mild-mannered retiree reluctantly relegated to a passive existence simmers an unquenchable thinker. His ideas help us to understand the world in which we (do not) live.

Even the dead have to fight for the truth. The protagonist of Maupassant's short story, "Was It a Dream?", goes to the cemetery to mourn at the grave of his beloved who had died unexpectedly. There, he witnesses an extraordinary scene. "I saw that all the graves were open, that all the dead bodies had emerged from them, and that all had effaced the lies inscribed on the gravestones by their relations, substituting the truth instead…. They were all writing at the same time, on the threshold of their eternal abode, the truth, the terrible and the holy truth of which everybody was ignorant, or pretended to be ignorant, while they were alive." Even greater was the shock of the terrified widower when he saw that his deceased wife was no exception. On her tombstone, where he had caused to be en-

graved, “She loved, was loved, and died”, now he read, “Having gone out in the rain one day, in order to deceive her lover, she caught cold and died.”

It seems that what really bothers us about what we do not accomplish before we die is no longer the collision with the truth about ourselves, but rather with the truth about what determines our lives; perhaps because we are annoyed by just how obvious it is. Many wise voices have spoken out to tell us this, but one of the most resonant is that of the historian and essayist, Miguel Amorós (Alcoy, 1949). An avid seeker after this truth about the situation that they have programmed us to accept with lies and substitutes for life, his talks and writings constitute expressions of some of the most stimulating examples of contemporary Spanish critical thought. The occasion of the publication of another book by this author has given us an opportunity to enjoy, question and/or learn from his lucidity.

**Jaime Gonzalo, for *Ruta 66* [JG]:** You converted to anarchism at the age of 18, at a time when the anarchist movement had been practically neutralized in the collective memory of Spain, and you founded or co-founded several anarchist organizations. A risky decision, fraught with sacrifice, in view of the fact that you lived in Franco’s Spain and your family had a background in that movement and you knew what fate might await you…. What are your impressions of this venture, what led you to make such a decision and what real possibilities did you think existed at the time that you thought you might take advantage of?

**Miguel Amorós [MA]:** Damned Wikipedia! I never converted to anything, it was not a matter of religious faith. I come from a classic working class family that was traumatized by the years immediately following the war, a miserable time of repression and poverty. In Alcoy, a city with deep roots in the anarchist and syndicalist movements, there was not a single soul committed to the cause of the workers who was not in hiding, in jail or in exile. Although the figure of my maternal

grandfather was very much present in my family's memory, I was never given too many details. The mentality of the survivor for whom nothing good can come from remembering the past: that was the limbo in which these matters resided during my entire adolescence. The road of rebellion arose for me as a kind of spiritual rash. The prospect that life offered was a good job, marriage with children, a house with a mortgage, a compact car and a television, the idiot box. Others have more effectively described this feeling of internal emptiness and anxiety that one suffers when at the end of puberty one is pushed to submerge oneself "in the glacial water of egoistic calculation" (Marx). I did not want to live the way I was ordered to live, wallowing in the mud of conventionality and repeating the vulgar gestures of the philistines. I found the authoritarianism that seemed to impregnate the anodyne life of my contemporaries distasteful, and I was even more repelled by its corollary, compulsory submission. I was curious and unsettled, I was eager to have some fun and to break things and I also had a strong desire to live—which at that age has a strong component of sexual desire. That's how it all began. Anarchism came later, when I went to college and I came up against "*carrillismo*", the Spanish Stalinism of the sixties, which was just as reactionary as its previous republican version. My "conversion" was not due to readings on this topic because no such texts existed at the time, but rather to an instinctive reaction against the opportunism of people whose vocation was to become manipulative and dictatorial bureaucrats, and who passed themselves off as the vanguard of the opposition to Franco.

**JG:** You paid a high price for the experience, you were sentenced to prison. What was it like in prison and what did you learn behind bars?

**MA:** My bad adventures and, why not, my bad reading, led me to prison. My father told me it was the latter, and by bad reading he meant all of the reading I had been doing. I was only in "the slammer" for a little while, I don't think I did four

months, each in a different prison. None of them exist today, of course. The former prison in Valencia is now an office building of the Generalitat and the Alicante prison is now used for temporary detention of convicted criminals. My family was keeping a very close watch over me and they did not let me down. I did not learn much from life in prison, but I did find it diverting. There was a higher proportion of good people among the ordinary prisoners in the prison than there was on the outside, and there was a vast number of stories to hear, true or invented. The worst thing about the experience was the subsequent consequences. When I was released, there was a file on me and I was forbidden from entering the University district. I could not work as a teacher, or have a passport, or even hang out at the gym, because all of these things required a certificate of "good conduct". Then I burned my bridges. I never looked back.

**JG:** Recently there have been occasional news reports in the disinformation media referring to the capture and dismantling of anarchist cells. It is hard to believe, after the ideological purge carried out during the 80s with the advent of "democracy", that there is still any real anarchism left in Spain, except in the framework of an excuse to carry out repression. This anarchist path, is it exhausted, does it make any sense in today's world, is it possible to think of a future anarchism?

**MA:** These incidents are of course set-ups whose goal is to fabricate a public enemy that will make it possible to justify the passage of regressive laws like the gag law, police brutality and law and order policies. Most of these set-ups were conceived in or near the building which houses the Department of the Interior of the Generalitat in Sabadell. The post-Franco parliamentary regime had to eliminate the libertarian features of the autonomous workers movement that emerged in the last years of the dictatorship, which had led to the return of a living corpse, the CNT, which many people clung to as a last resort of anti-authoritarianism. This anarchist road was historically superseded, but it did not succumb solely due to its own con-

very lucid form of pessimism because it was still devoted to progress, but it served as a rallying cry for the first frustrated generation of recent history. It was more or less around that time that the first issue of the *Encyclopédie des Nuisances* questioned the idea of progress. Progress, understood as economic and technological growth, has its negative side. This train has brought us wars, inequalities, corruption, disease, pollution…. Developmentalism depletes resources, destroys cultures, concentrates the population in insufferable conurbations, creates pockets of marginalized people, ruins nature, tortures the climate and throws the planet out of balance. Facing this kind of panorama you cannot be an optimist. The evils brought to us by the realization of the bourgeois concept of progress can be cured by getting rid of it, which implies a social reorganization that is incompatible with private profit and separate representation.



tradictions but also because of a policy of industrial restructuring that was very effectively administered by the PSOE, which turned the factory-based working class into a museum exhibit. Anarchism as a complete ideology, a cookbook and a storehouse of clichés, has no future. Anarchism is best understood as an aspiration to a full life, one that is fraternal and communitarian, without institutions that escape the control of the collectivity, where the connections between persons are direct and egalitarian, not mediated by things. To the extent that social struggles are oriented towards these goals and use means that do not contradict them, then anarchism has a future.

**JG:** When you first became involved with anarchism, the struggle against Franco was already underway and there was quite a lot of student unrest, which you discuss in your book, *1968. El año sublime de la acracia* [1968: The Sublime Year of Acracy]. Since democratization, many people have draped themselves in an alleged anti-Franco past as if it was an academic degree to be listed on their resumes. How much of that struggle was myth and mystification?

**MA:** 1968 was my first year of college, not when I became an anarchist, at a time when I rejected all authority and no program of demands satisfied me, either. I felt a kind of existential boiling rage against the whole status quo, similar to what other people felt. It was a state of mind that was seizing the youth of the planet and which was bearing fruit in revolts of another kind. Our revolt had the virtue of nipping in the bud the first internal attempts at democratization carried out by the Franco regime, thus forcing it to show its true face with the state of emergency of 1969. These attempts only came to fruition with the death of the dictator, since everyone knows that the apparatus of the dictatorship and the socialist-communist opposition agreed on a Transition to parliamentarism that was stage-managed from the highest levels of power, and sealed with a pact of silence and an amnesty that exonerated the criminals of Franco's regime. The immense majority of the new leaders of

the "left" came from either dissident factions within the Franco regime, or from the last-minute opposition. Practically all of them had to improvise an imaginary resume, since almost none of them could truthfully claim that their political activity extended to the period before 1975. The so-called "democracy", which is no more of a democracy than Podemos, was not forged in the crucible of the streets, but in the halls of power.

**JG:** After you were released from prison you went into exile in France—what year was that?—and there you made contact with the situationists. What was known about the situationists at the time in Spain and how could you obtain their works when you lived on the Peninsula?

**MA:** I secretly crossed the border to freedom, with the help of my brother and a friend, and I took refuge in Paris. That was in April or May of 1975. For several years before that date, the theoretical *impasse* of classical anarchism, as well as the inconsistent and capitulatory conduct of the leaders of the CNT during the war, who renounced everything "except victory", led me towards the situationist critique, a modern and coherent view of the class struggle, methodologically Marxist-Hegelian, but which distilled what was essential from anarchism and from the artistic vanguards, that is, the liberation of desire and the subversion of everyday life. The Situationist International dissolved in 1972, so it was impossible for me to make contact with it. I did, however, meet Jaime Semprun, who had ephemeral relations with Eduardo Rothe and Guy Debord in connection with the Portuguese "Carnation" Revolution.

**JG:** A fascinating and enigmatic personality: in Paris you knew Guy Debord personally and you worked with him. What was he like when the going got tough? Did he coherently exhibit the intransigence that his analysis reflected with respect to reality? I mean, just how "authentic" was he, and to what degree did he scorn the temptations of the system he fought against?



States has given rise to the emergence of an extremist party that has no qualms about making the population of the West feel the deadly effects of the war in the Middle East. What is ironic about this development is the fact that this party, when it was first formed, was financed, armed and trained by the capitalist States and their Islamic allies. The reactions to these developments on the part of the middle classes in northern and southern Europe have been quite different. While the southern Europeans interpret the crisis and the war as domestic or foreign political problems, the northern Europeans see them as security and border problems. While the middle class of the Mediterranean countries likes to express a humanitarianism that costs it nothing, in the rest of Europe that same class contemplates the immigrants and refugees as a foreign body that is very costly and that does not conform to its idiosyncrasies, which is why there is so much support for a reactionary wave of ethnic identity movements and nationalism is returning in its most proto-fascist forms.

**JG:** You express some very alarming, if not alarmist, reflections, with respect to Progress, that incurable cancer: you have expressed the idea that there is no future—which is to say that the Sex Pistols were right— and that justice and freedom are increasingly less concrete, that there are no beings with independent judgment but only people who are unreflectively absorbed in their toys, that the only progress is that of leaders who make progress thanks to the progress of ignorance, submission and control. "If history follows the course laid out by progressivist hubris, the endpoint will be desolation." Is our outlook so bleak?

**MA:** John Lydon recounts in his autobiography that the Pistols sang "no future" precisely because they insisted that there should be one. Back then, the United Kingdom was suffering the consequences of a prolonged economic recession that was overcome with brutal austerity measures during the Thatcher era and a dash of patriotism (the Malvinas War). It was not a

would affect their personal routines and threaten that lifestyle that has cost them so many unsatisfied desires and so much repressed will. Better an evil you know than…. As for me, as the other Marx, Groucho, said, I would never agree to join a club of voters that would admit me as a member, which is why I have never voted.

**JG:** You say that indiscriminate terrorism plays a fundamental role for the survival of our contemporary political and economic classes, providing an alibi for introducing a police state. What is obvious to you, is only a paranoid conspiracy to others. In any event, however, the rise of Islamic terrorism, and the Islamic penetration into Europe, are matters that give us a lot of food for thought in this sense. The refugee "crisis", for example: is it part of some plan?

**MA:** Joaquín Maurín, the founder of the POUM, said with respect to the "white" terrorism that afflicted Barcelona between 1916 and 1924: "It is an undeniable historical phenomenon that a class in power, when it feels its enemy undermining the foundations of its power, resorts to terrorism, whose forms vary according to circumstances." Today we know all about the "strategy of tension" in Italy during the seventies, to which the panic-stricken Italian ruling class resorted to terrorism to paralyze any inclinations the working class population may have had to oppose the state by means other than the incorporation of the Italian Stalinists into the government. A similar strategy, but on a lesser scale, was applied in Spain between 1976 and 1981. The attacks and kidnappings staged by FRAP and GRAPO, the extreme right and parallel units of the police forces, were indications of an internal struggle between the insiders from the Franco regime who favored modernization and those who were more reluctant to dismantle the police-trade union apparatus of the dictatorship. Jihadist terrorism, on the other hand, was a direct consequence of the war that the capitalist countries are waging in the Middle East and elsewhere for control over major reserves of oil and gas. The abundance of failed



**MA:** I never knew Debord personally; I only exchanged some letters with him in 1981 when I was participating in his campaign on behalf of the liberation of the anarchist prisoners. Then I maintained relations with him for a couple of years through the mediation of third parties (Jaime Semprun and Christian Sebastiani). Although it might seem hard to believe, he was easy to deal with. Problems arose with differences of opinion. His conversation was very one-track; rather than engaging in a dialogue, he engaged in a monologue. When it came to women he was terrible. He allowed himself to be swept away by momentary impressions, by details, by unexpected separations: One might feel that one was the *crème de la elite revolutionnaire* and the next minute one might be treated like a noxious reactionary. He was the most authentic and most lucid person of his time, the most artistic of the revolutionaries and the most revolutionary of the artists. He never made the slightest concession to the cultural or political circles that he profoundly despised. He was undoubtedly someone special, generous, impassioned, sometimes unjust; a strong, unique personality, a genius who always walked on the wild side, a really free being who of his own free will broke the cup of life when it had been drained to the dregs.

**JG:** I have always thought that the "rebellious" potential of icons like Marlon Brando in "The Wild One", or the pre-RCA Elvis, and this even goes for the Counterculture as a whole, amounts to nothing compared with the subversive charisma of Debord. Was Debord's revolution the only genuine "spiritual" revolution of the 50s and 60s?

**MA:** Debord was never an icon of anything, he was always engaged in a continuous war against the society of the spectacle, he was permanently ensconced in negativity. Even now it is no easy matter to recuperate him as a spectacular image of lucidity, and the merchants of culture who are trying to do so are only mutilating Debord's radicality and aestheticizing him, without managing to turn out a credible figure. Debord turned

revolution into an art and he did the same thing with his life. He was someone who led the way in the vanguard of his time, but he did not embody that vanguard as a whole. His contribution was decisive, but it was not the only one. We need only think of André Breton, Daniel Guerin, Simone Weil, Lewis Mumford, Siegfried Krakauer, Murray Bookchin, Herbert Marcuse, Gunther Anders, Dwight MacDonald, Jaime Semprun, Agustín García Calvo, and others.

**JG:** From exile you saw the consolidation in Spain of the construct of the Transition, a farce that you had already exposed, with Jaime Semprun, in 1976 with "The Manuscript Found in Vitoria". Did you ever discuss this topic with Debord?

**MA:** Before the "Manuscript", we published "The Spanish Campaign of the European Revolution", in which we discussed the workers struggles in the assemblies and pointed to the possibility that they might develop into a coordinated system of proletarian councils. The Transition can be interpreted as an attempt to abort this process that threatened to get out of control; the Transition was half opposition, with the trade unionists in the forefront, and half dictatorship, whose public face was the police. At the time, Debord had a falling out with Jaime and he prevented the French publisher, Champ Libre, from publishing the "Manuscript", which, as it turned out, was all for the best, because the pamphlet was published in Spanish and distributed in Spain.

**JG:** While the constitutional monarchy was being established here, the PSOE under González was created with the stroke of a pen and we were reminded of that famous saying of Lampedusa concerning this change in which nothing changed, you persevered in situationist praxis by collaborating with the journal of critical thought known as the *Encyclopédie des Nuisances*, which was in some ways an heir of the Situationist International. What can you tell us, objectively, about this journey?



**MA:** In mass society, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, individuals are incapable of normal relations with each other. So we have the paradox that crowds engender isolation, and isolation engenders fear and neuroses. A society of solitary individuals does not admit any norms of conduct that are valid for all, since it is a disordered mass of persons without any possibility of communicating directly and normally with each other. The norms must be imposed from the outside, from the state apparatus, by way of mechanisms of surveillance and police coercion.

**JG:** A State like our contemporary State, you pointed out, paraphrasing Debord, which is contrary to reason, to life and to so many other things, "is condemned to aberration and collapse". No one would say such a thing today, seeing as this State perpetuates itself even as its nature is becoming more obvious, as is now happening in Spain. What do you think about these opinion polls that indicate so much support at the voting booth for the PP and the PSOE? I am asking you this because you say that "the economy and kickbacks do not work without order, and the partiocracy, if it is not exactly order, is a disorder that functions as much to the benefit of the economy as to that of profits themselves. It is established disorder". By the way, do you vote?

**MA:** The modern State is a machine resting on a foundation of sand that any crisis can destroy. In 1936, the republican State collapsed overnight despite the fact that the fascist revolt was not as successful as was anticipated. The coup attempt of 23F kept the State in a state of suspense of days, which is how long it took to convince the military high command and the royal house. Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland have been on the verge of collapse because of such futile matters as unpaid state debts, real estate bubbles or banking black holes. It is precisely the fragility of the State that pushes the submissive and alienated masses into the arms of the traditional parties, because they are afraid that the remedies proposed by the new parties

civil service jobs submerged the wage earning masses in conformism and locked them up within private life, which allowed others to pursue politics as a well-remunerated job, with revolving doors that guaranteed that they would never lose their source of income.

**JG:** In fact, the middle class has also been abolished, it has been turned into a wage earning class, "a docile being ready to sacrifice its convictions and its dignity for the comfort of the automobile, family life, social security and a pension. This fear of losing its status on the market and this lack of self-respect prepared it for every renunciation". Is this the worst kind of fear?

**MA:** The acquisitive level of the middle class has been partially reduced, but its mentality is still intact. Its fear, however, has grown exponentially, and the task of every good government consists in the correct management of this fear. Saint-Just said in one of his speeches that "all other arts have produced masterpieces, but the art of government has only produced monsters". We are already familiar with some of these monsters, called politicians, but we do not pay as much attention to the masses of slaves, who, to preserve their lives as stockyard cattle, are ready to bow down before anyone who instills them with a need for this condition and to stigmatize all those who are excluded from this vast paradise.

**JG:** You emphasize the fact that the "crisis" that has generated this fear and this uncertainty has not been translated into a demand for drastic changes, as common sense might perhaps lead one to expect: "In the masses affected by this trend, a sceptical, possibilist attitude predominates, since festive and cretinous submission is inevitable in societies suffering from anomie. Phenomena such as precarious jobs, pauperization and exclusion have not led to significant social conflicts, unlike what had happened only a few decades before." Anomie now seems just as coterminous with our existence as the fact that human nature can descend yet further into degradation….



**MA:** You are talking about two different periods. When I returned from exile I got involved with a few working class friends in activity in favor of "Proletarian Autonomy and Social Revolution", a very workerist, libertarian councilist project, halfway between the ICO and the SI (Informations Correspondance Ouvrières and the Situationist International). The defeat of the strike wave led by the assembly movement was made possible by the employers' insistent support for the legalized trade unions, the activities of the parties, and the repression unleashed by the authorities, which then commenced their strategy of tension by infiltrating the extremist organizations to foment inexplicable attacks like the one at La Scala. The Moncloa Accords put an end to the revolutionary class struggle in the Spanish State. In France, a strong anti-nuclear movement arose that could have become radicalized in contact with the movements of resistance to industrial restructuring, and, on another level, in contact with the radical sectors of the Polish (Solidarnosc) and the Russian (SMOT) workers movements. There is a curious song by the Angelic Upstarts about this. That was the era of the magazine, *L'Assommoir*, the book, *The Nuclearization of the World*, which I translated into Spanish, and the third pamphlet of Los Incontrolados. The demands of the anti-nuclear movement would not go beyond a moratorium on the construction of nuclear reactors, and this created an opportunity for the green parties. The environmentalists immediately got involved in politics in order to work on behalf of a green capitalism and to undermine the protest movements, and that is what they are still doing. The *Encyclopédie*, formed in 1984, was an attempt to come to grips with this reality and to conduct a critical analysis of the social conflict of the 1960s. We had a feeling that the work that awaited us would be comparable to the work of the SI, with respect to its importance.

**JG:** Despite the enmity, based on his congenital inferiority complex, that Alfonso Guerra felt for him, Jorge Semprún, the father of Jaime Semprún, the driving force behind the *Ency-*

*clopédie des Nuisances*, was named Minister of Culture by Felipe. How did this news affect the journal?

**MA:** It didn't really matter. It had been fifteen years since Jaime had broken with his father, whom he considered to be a bourgeoisified intellectual who had spent many years as an accomplice of the Stalinists. The news did however give rise to some jokes. Jorge Semprún was the paradigm of the organic intellectual, egolatrous and chameleon-like, a seller of himself and a model for social climbers.

**JG:** What circumstances were responsible for your return to Spain—and in what year—and what was your impression when you arrived and saw how Iberian democracy was developing on the ground….

**MA:** In late 1976 I got a passport from the embassy and the first thing I did was to take a trip through England, just when the punk scene was getting underway. In April of 1977 I returned to the Peninsula and I made arrangements to print "The Manuscript Found in Vitoria". There was a lot going on in Barcelona, but it was mostly dominated by frivolity and fashionable radical chic. The confusion increased and the most diametrically opposed camps intermingled: some apathetic passerby might lie down to take a nap in the Parque Güell and wake up as a nationalist in the middle of an Estatut d'Autonomía demonstration. The proletarian offensive was broken on March 3, 1976 in Vitoria/Gasteiz, but the workers movement still enraged Franco's heirs, whether of the right or the left. With a handful of associates I plunged into a wandering itinerary from one hot-spot of struggle to another. I especially recall the strikes of the ceramics industry workers in Castellón and the shoe industry workers in Alicante.

**JG:** Since then your activity in the critical sphere has been constant—could you also tell me about your activity as it was related to earning a living, your career as a teacher—and you have constructed your own platform, the publishing house/journal *Argelaga*, which defines itself as "anti-developmentalist



worship of success, [and] political 'realism'". Whenever I take the subway and I see everyone absorbed in their smart phones, I think of the zombie movies. Will this get worse?

**MA:** There is a law that is inherent to our contemporary way of life that can be expressed as follows: "Everything that can get worse, will get worse." Technology has always been the great ally of Capital, *dixit* Marx, since every technological innovation has increased the yield of the means of production and abolished jobs. It has not ceased to do so, but has allowed everyday life to enter the domain of the economy. The most insignificant gesture of private life can be source of profit if it is correctly mechanized and capitalized. Technology allows the logic of the market to penetrate into everyday life in ways that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago. The same goes for levels of surveillance. The body snatchers that you mentioned are now a technical possibility thanks to nanotechnology.

**JG:** One of your more striking premises is that the suppression of the working class, or, more precisely, of its consciousness, was the greatest counterrevolutionary achievement of capitalism. It is in fact remarkable to observe how, in documentaries about the 1970s, at the threshold of the transitional con game, one can see working class people who are much more well-informed ideologically, with articulate and educated opinions. Now, this slave class is more concerned with sales at Primark and its "discourse" has become illiterate….

**MA:** The Transition had an economic dimension. National capitalism was dissolved into larger market structures until everything was globalized. The tertiarization of the economy overwhelmingly diminished the role of labor in the productive sector and led to a corresponding increase of labor in the service sector. This shift of wage labor from one sector to another entailed the effects of massification, social uprooting and anomie in the proletariat. The relative economic prosperity that was brought by pensions, unlimited credit and

people like Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard been that pernicious?

**MA:** The situationists coined the term, "recuperation", to refer to the operation of devitalization and pillage of critical thought by way of an incoherent, confusionist, and frankly superficial discourse, which could only serve the purposes of the established order. The recuperators of the past used the university as their base of operations, disseminating a flood of frivolous and pretentious literature that presently serves as a "toolbox" for our contemporary recuperators, who are much more numerous than their predecessors. The impostors that you mention were no worse than their admiring readers: they were just doing their jobs.

**JG:** One of the pillars of submissive thought, you say, is "the theoretical annihilation of the subject of consciousness". You give the impression that, confronted by this assault, one must be on high alert twenty-four hours a day. You cannot even sleep, for by doing so you run the risk of ending up like the protagonists in "The Invasion of the Body Snatchers". Living like that is so stifling….

**MA:** As the English say, *Don't panic*.[3] My statement refers to the efforts of the ideologues of submission to prevent the formation of a conscious collective—we could call it a historical force, or a class. Not letting yourself get dragged around by your nose is something that does not demand any special lucidity, nor does it generate an anxiety that could deprive us of sleep. When we wake up we will still be the same people.

**JG:** In your opinion, technology has been a major ally for turbo-capitalism in its quest to proletarianize the world and to disseminate that postmodern mentality based on "narcissism, existential emptiness, frivolity, consumerism, the absence of any serious commitment, fear, loneliness, emotional problems and problems with relationships, vapid gregariousness, the

[3] In English in the original—translator's note.



and libertarian" and which to some degree constitutes a new version of the *Encyclopédie*. As a publisher, what degree of real, more or less proven interest, do you believe exists at this time in Spain with respect to critical thought and the unmasking of that which determines our everyday lives?

**MA:** I signed up with the assembly of unemployed teachers and the only position that I managed to get was as an elementary school teacher. I began the course in 1979–80 and I obtained a stable job that allowed me to avoid dreading each day as a struggle to survive. The prospect for radical change in Spain had evaporated. Tejero's coup terrified the personnel of the State and that hybrid of Franco's Spain and parliamentarism that they called "democracy" was imposed as the lesser of two evils. Meanwhile, the Berlin Wall fell. In France, a radical anti-nuclear movement re-emerged after the accident at Chernobyl in 1987 and the "Irradiated People of the World, Unite!" Committee, whose positions were close to our own, was formed. During the same period, there were protests against large-scale, pointless projects like building highways and the high speed train. In the *Encyclopédie* we imagined that we were at the threshold of a new cycle of struggles, which we defined as anti-industrial struggles. We put our support behind these struggles and we formed, with some other people, an Alliance against All Harmful Phenomena [*Nuisances*]. Later, I think it was in 1993, at the suggestion of Semprun, the Éditions de l'Encyclopédie des Nuisances was established, in which I played a very minor role. At that time I was working on a historical review of anarchism during the revolutionary civil war. My first book was about The Friends of Durruti Group, founded by Jaime Balius; my second book was on the Iron Column; my third was devoted to the Andalusian anarchist, Francisco Maroto; my fourth book was on Durruti during the civil war. *Argelaga* belongs to a later stage; that was a project that was conceived in 2013 in close cooperation with Joan B. that followed in the footsteps of interesting antecedents like

the *Boletín de Los Amigos de Ludd* [Bulletin of the Friends of Ludd], publishers like Muturreko, Etcétera, the *Raíces* [Roots] journal or the old magazine *Ekintza Zuzena*. These are not good times for critique, now that we have a reformist middle class that is trying to resolve the crisis with an "assault" on legislative seats. Everything that comes from political realism is viewed with jaundiced eyes, but that is how it is.

**JG:** One of the titles listed in Argelaga's catalogue is your book, *Rock para principiantes* [Rock for Beginners] (2014), a highly condensed but instructive synthesis of the development and consumerist assimilation of this culture. Why did you write that book….

**MA:** It started with a conversation in a bar with a friend of mine from Alcoy who was involved with an online journal called MISC. I was surprised by the fact that the ignorance of the new generations involves more than just forgetting the historical memory of revolutions and has embraced one of the most typical manifestations of the youth of the sixties. No one remembered anything from before the era of punk. What poverty!

**JG:** What was your relation to rock? I suppose that because you grew up in Valencia, one of the most prolific provinces for the Spanish pop music of the sixties, this would be a determinant factor….

**MA:** When I was a little kid I listened to rock and to every kind of music that was played on the radio. I even learned to sing in the chorus of my school. The small cities and villages preserved some vitality and during the sixties bands were formed in even the most remote places that imitated the Beatles, the Shadows, Presley, the Teen Tops, etc., and performed versions of the most popular pop and soul songs. I liked rock, but I was not gifted with interpretive talent. I wasn't into the singer-songwriter genre, either. I liked Dylan but I despised what Raimon, Ovidi, Pi de la Serra and Lluis Llach were doing; it sounded like an opportunist copy, hollow, like pseudo-



dismantling of capitalism and the dissolution of the State, that builds barricades and turns its back on institutions, but very much the contrary. It is a generation of the prematurely aged, which criminalizes those who defend themselves from the police, and lays claim to the streets in order to transform them into high-tech discotheques, rehabilitating the old fetishes with cosmic glitter.

**JG:** Podemos, which you have referred to as "the remake of the United Left [Izquierda Unida]", is the product of the so-called civil society movement, which you have characterized as an "assault on the easy chairs" and concerning which you are very critical: "the presence of politicians of a new kind who hold the balance of power alongside other, more well-known politicians, is a factor of stability for the particratic caste and gives it a shot of legitimacy".

**MA:** The communists have always been the vanguard of the counterrevolution. If, forty years ago, with a strong workers movement, this vanguard took the form of a workers party, now, without any prospects of revolution on the horizon, this same vanguard acquires the lineaments of a renovated social democracy. These days, the seizure of power is not based on channeling the violence unleashed by the class struggle, but on the frustration of the members of the bourgeoisified middle class, who think of themselves as the "citizenry". The "assault on the institutions" is nothing but the electoral exploitation of the disillusionment of "civil society". You only need to take a look at the institutional conduct of Podemos and its partners to realize that they have not regenerated anything, but are reaffirming everything just as it is.

**JG:** Postmodernism is another one of your bêtes noires. You define it as reactionary, as expressing the predominance of individual interests, the immediate satisfaction of false needs, unconsciousness, ignorance, manipulated desires and a spirit that is content with increasingly less convincing substitutes. Have

of Pierre Nora, by means of which the past could also be imagined. Was Hassan-i Sabbah therefore correct when he said that "nothing is true and everything is permitted"?

**MA:** That saying does not come from Hassan i-Sabbah but from a German orientalist from the early 19th century, Hammer Purgstall, who abusively reduced the entire Ismaelite doctrine to that principle for the purpose of exposing the disastrous influence of secret societies on weak governments. The French Revolution had such a profound impact on conservative thought that it caused the proponents of the latter to believe in a universal and perpetual conspiracy that started with the medieval heretics, and, passing through the Templars and the Jesuits, found a home among the Masonic lodges, the alleged culprits behind the revolution. *Si non e vero, e ben trovato*![2] The conspiracies of nihilist fanatics are nonetheless very much a contemporary phenomenon when it comes to power's tactics of disinformation, by means of which power manufactures the terrorist image of its enemies, whether anarchists or Islamic fundamentalists.

**JG:** In the text, *Genealogía del pensamiento débil* [Genealogy of Weak Thought], you speak of a "submissive thought that serves as the watchdog over subversive appearances" and of "consumers of ideology who want the prestige of revolt and the comfort of order at the same time". It would appear that this can be applied to 15M, to *podemismo* and to the whole new political (re)generation that seems to amount to a project to sell the youth to their leaders, like rock.

**MA:** Weak thought, post-structuralism and deconstructionism—*French Theory*—arose as a reaction against May '68. Its goal was to destroy revolutionary thought by presenting it as the bearer of totalitarianism. The technophile generation of 15M was weaned on its postulates, its topics, and its pseudo-radicalism. It is not a generation that advocates the

[2] "Even if it is not true, it is well conceived" [translator's note].



transcendent poetry. Nothing comparable to "The Times They Are A-Changin'". They were the musical wing of the opposition that made a deal with *franquismo* to create the disgusting particratic regime we have now. Just look at how the front row of seats at one of Raimon's latest concerts is full of Ministers, political bigwigs and old trade unionists who sold out. I will stick with Nadine's coffee-colored Cadillac, Chuck Berry's first single.[1] That was less pretentious and more authentic.

**JG:** In *Rock for Beginners* you conclude that no subsequent musical style "has broken out of its particular ghetto, because none of them could express the universal hopes of freedom and self-realization like the rock of that era; they taught no lessons that could be forgotten, nor did they challenge the established order very effectively, nor did they fan the flames of protest for very long". You also say that pop music "therefore became the bearer of truth, which, according to Hegel, is also beauty, and is spontaneously manifested, subjective and incomplete, appealing to the senses—or 'good vibrations'—instead of reason, the spirit of the modern social revolution". I partly agree with both of these opinions, but I get the feeling that they harbor a certain idealization that I suppose has something to do with the fact that you were there, when you were young, so that there might be an element of nostalgia or Proustian longing for days gone by.

**MA:** I, too, have been burned, like Nerval, by the rays of "the black sun of melancholy". Nostalgia, more or less. In the past rock was a catalyst of revolutionary energies and nostalgia tends to idealize this. We recall a time when the monotonous vulgarity of the present was not thought to be creative and original, when authenticity stole in through the cracks that the prevailing monotony could not seal. Yearning for what has been lost has not turned me into a pathetic old rocker like Miguel Ríos, but I use it as a weapon in the struggle for a different

[1] His first single after his release from prison—translator's note.

kind of future than the one that our leaders want to impose on us.

**JG:** Your most recent book is *Filosofía en el tocador* [Philosophy in the Boudoir] (2016), a collection of transcripts of talks, texts and introductions that contains, if not all, at least a good share of the main themes of your discourse. Beginning with the truth. "In a world dominated by capitalist irrationality, truth is only a moment of the false. Its revelation no longer changes anything". How have we descended into this new dark age, which is so blindingly illuminated?

**MA:** That was a paraphrase of one of the theses from Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, and Debord's thesis was a *détournement* of a quotation from Hegel. The products of social activity, whether they are commodities or institutions, escape from the control of the producers, and confront them as separate powers. Human relations are no longer direct and have become mediated by things or images, they have become dehumanized. This is called alienation. Being is transposed outside of the self. Reality is concealed by appearance. And truth is concealed by falsehood. How did we reach this point? At first, gradually, thanks to a process of colonization of the world by the commodity and a gradual replacement of society by the State. Then, during the time of the spectacle, with the unification of Capital and the State, all at once.

**JG:** Speaking of fascism, you point out that under such a regime, "thought or the search for the truth is not valued, because the social order is exclusively based on the bald-faced lie". At this very moment in Spain, and in many other places, the same thing is happening….

**MA:** Postmodernism, which is the philosophical reaction in late capitalism, has relativized the truth, putting it on the same level with the lie. It was an attempt to abolish the points of reference on the basis of which objective statements could be made. In politics this is the job of the spectacle, or as they used to say, propaganda. Power has at its disposal a media apparatus of disinformation and non-communication thanks to which it transmits its messages and orders, and compliance is monitored by way of a sophisticated mechanism of control. What we have is a peaceful conditioning of the population that is politely leading us to a police state. The particratic regime is very similar to the Nazi regime with respect to the way it functions, except that it is based on persuasion and does not resort to violence except in extreme cases.

**JG:** The neutralization of truth seems to be a direct consequence of the neutralization of History, another one of your concerns. Somewhere you say that "History is tragic, because contradictions are incubated and develop within it that can only be resolved in violent struggle … the secret will be revealed only to the spectators of the macabre last act." Is violence the only possible way to retrieve History from those who write it? Is knowing the secret worth so much trouble?

**MA:** That quotation pertains to one of the main conclusions of Hegel's philosophy of history. George Orwell, in his book *1984*, exposed the totalitarian principle that "ignorance is strength". The erasure of memory is a weapon to control the past used by those who control the present. And, once again returning to *1984*, "those who control the present control the future". Obviously, the controllers will not abdicate of their own free will, but will have to be evicted. Is it worth the trouble? I would answer that with another question: is it worth the trouble to live in ignorance? The truth will make you free, as the New Testament says. When we allow ourselves to be administered by the State and represented by the parties we are permitted to live in a kingdom of forgetting where the *aurea mediocritas* [golden mean] is the final goal, although I am afraid that, the way things are going, not even this goal is within the reach of many people. The truth will make us free, but the truth alone will not make us happy.

**JG:** History is above all else Memory, you say, but there is nonetheless the paradox of Historical Memory, that invention