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Spanish state

Defeat for the PP and the bipartisan system

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On Sunday, May 24, 2015 elections were held in 9,000 municipalities of the Spanish state and in 13 autonomous regions (with the exception of Andalusia, Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country), for the councils of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa (Basque Country), the provincial councils in the Canary Islands and the councils of the three Balearic islands.

The key fact of the day is that the Popular Party (PP), although it obtained more than 6 million votes (and was thus the biggest party in terms of votes) lost 2.5 million votes compared to the last municipal elections. It beat the Socialist Party (PSOE) by only 400,000 votes. The PSOE itself lost 775,000 votes compared to the previous municipal elections, in spite of a significant increase in participation.

The second fact is that the bipartisanship on which the political regime established in 1978 is based has experienced a major setback; these two parties scored just over 50% of the votes (against almost 80 per cent in the previous municipal elections).

The third element is the strong eruption of the candidacies of Popular Unity (Candidaturas de Unidad Popular-CUP) supported by Podemos who obtained excellent results in Barcelona and Madrid, but also in the city of Cadiz and several others. The same goes for Maras in Galicia in different parts of Galicia.

These successes call into question the monopoly of the conservative right - CiU in Barcelona, or the PP elsewhere - of the governments of the major cities.

The fourth element is that the results for Podemos were good, in the municipal elections as in the regional parliaments, even if they remained below the expectations of an important part of the left. In the best of cases it only became the third biggest force.

For its part, Ciudadanos, the option for the regeneration of the system built from the boards of directors of certain large companies, did not achieve the expected results.

Finally, the United Left (Izquierda Unida-IU) lost its institutional representation in all the parliaments of the autonomies, except in Asturias and Aragon: its electorate has been absorbed by Podemos, which constitutes a failure without precedent for IU.

In terms of institutional political power, the collapse of the PP is still greater than in terms of votes cast. The PP lost the absolute majority in Cantabria, Castilla-la Mancha and the communities of Valencia and Madrid; and it also lost its governments in Aragon, Extremadura and the Balearic islands. For the moment, it holds power only in Rioja and Murcia and it is not sure of keeping in Castilla Leon.

In the municipal elections in Barcelona, Ada Colau (a list supported by Podemos) elected 11 councillors, CIU (nationalist right) 10, Ciudadanos 5, and the PSC (Catalan Socialist Party) with the worst score in its history, 4. In Madrid, Esperanza Aguirre (PP) elected 21 councillors against 20 for Manuela Carmena (supported by Podemos) and 9 for the PSOE. The PP will not govern because the total of left councillors is greater than those of the right.

In Cadiz, Kichi Gonzalez, a member of Anticapitalistas, led the list which obtained 8 municipal councillors, against 10

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for Teofila Martinez of the PP, which thus loses its absolute majority. This means that the left as a whole has more councillors than the right for the first time in two decades.

In the same way, in La Coruna and Santiago de Compostela, the Mareas Atlánticas have challenged the power of Feijó, a possible successor to Rajoy as head of the PP.

In trying to make a partial analysis, Pedro Sanchez, leader of the PSOE, has said that the results “are the beginning of the end of Mariano Rajoy as Prime Minister”. What Sanchez has not said is in which direction the country is going. His project remains strictly that of social neoliberalism. Not surprising that the socialist pretender to replace Rajoy has also voted for the reform of article 135 of the Constitution, which gives priority to the payment of the debt over social spending.

Sanchez is mistaken if he thinks that the solution is a new edition of alternation between the two dynastic parties. The defeat of the PP is the expression of the rejection of the policy of social cuts and challenges to human rights and democracy; policies that have led the majority of the working class and the majority of the population into a situation of continuing depletion while the elites are enriched, with the result that Spanish society is the most unequal in the European Union.

In these elections, Podemos and the candidatures of Popular Unity (CUP) in which it participated have been consolidated as tools to enable the people and working classes to express themselves. Change continues to advance. The message of the polls is clear: the PP out of all institutions. But the challenge for Podemos and the CUP is to deepen this change to achieve a democratic rupture and prevent the PSOE implementing a cosmetic regeneration of the old regime. To get there, Podemos and the CUP should first make sure the PP cannot govern, but especially they need to develop popular mobilization alongside the social organizations and deepen programmatic and strategic thinking with the objective of defining the future and promoting the active participation of citizens in public affairs, by creating new forms of popular decision making at regional and municipal levels.

The response of the Anticapitalistas current to the results spells out its main task: “It is now time to open a massive and democratic debate in the popular movement to win the coming general elections. We need to continue expanding and organizing the tidal wave of change, with open assemblies in all corners of the state. Popular unity, a radical break with the logic of managing austerity, a clear commitment to involving people in all the decisions that are to come, including the policy of pacts, are the way to win”.