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Spanish state

”Perhaps with unstable governments the citizens will win”

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Teresa Rodriguez is the general secretary of Podemos in Andalusia. She was interviewed by Carmen Torres for *El Mundo* on May 30 2015. Hurrying to take the C1 bus which takes her to the Santa Justa station in Seville to go by train to Cadiz. Teresa Rodriguez, secretary general of Podemos in Andalusia and spokesperson of its parliamentary group, has given up the official car. “If you live in a housing estate and you are going in an official car to Parliament and then back home, I imagine that you don't feel the pressure from the street” she explains. Of the 4,254 Euros which correspond to her post she takes only 1,730, the salary she had as a teacher. The rest is donated to social causes. The carpets of the Parliament are trodden with care, to prevent the “seduction of the institutions” from trapping Podemos.

Will Podemos govern in Cadiz?

I guess that the PSOE will be thinking that it would be quite difficult to explain to the locals that it will let Teofila Martinez govern for four more years after such a big electoral upheaval, and when there is hope of change in the city. What if we would like to see is that beyond voting for the inauguration because they have no choice, there would be a prior level of agreement to have a stable mandate , where we can exercise the action of government, agreeing sometimes, and with discrepancies at other times, but seeking the governability of the city. We want them to be responsible and if they vote in favour this project goes ahead.

Does that mean that the PSOE would enter the municipal government?

No. In Cadiz, the comrades are going to have a debate with two political forces. With the PSOE and with “Ganar Cádiz en Compañía”. Not with the PP , because we are proposing an alternative to Teofila Martinez. And not with Ciudadanos either because its economic programme is too similar to that of the PP. We understand yes there is confluence and coincidence in action with the other two parties, despite how different we are. The PSOE brings too heavy a burden with the policies that have been developed and because we know how the forces that govern with them behave. We have seen it in Andalusia in the last three years...

What is the objective of Podemos with the municipalities? IU, for example, wants to dislodge the PP to the maximum extent possible. Are you looking for the same?

Each candidacy will take its decisions and is autonomous. We can have a common approach for those registering for candidacies based on three points: Throw the PP out of the institutions because we understand that it has a special responsibility in what has been done in the past few years in this country, which has resulted in the suffering of many people. As the PSOE unfortunately has also formed part of that strategy for a long time, we are not going to be part of governments with the PSOE. That is to say, what we are going to put in the centre, as in Madrid, Barcelona or in the Parliament, are what we understand as urgent measures related to corruption and transparency, evictions and public services. That is what we are going to put on the table, and not the exchange of parcels of power.

So in principle tripartite deals are ruled out?

That is our position, but each candidate will make their decision. We will be opposing shortcuts and aiming to squeeze the full potential out of the parliaments, to regain ownership in relation to the governments.

There are parties that warn that this situation creates a dangerous instability in the institutions

I think we have seen that the more stable the governments were, the more instability citizens suffer in their daily lives. In the councils of ministers, absolute majorities approved Friday after Friday the toughest measures against the people. Every Thursday half of Spain wondered what would be taken from them on Friday. There was stability in the institutions and instability among the people.

Employment reforms, social cuts, worse conditions in schools, in the health centres ... If it now appears that instability has moved to the spaces of public representation, maybe we can have stability for the citizens. That is to say, governments have only been stable for cutting social and employment rights. If they now have to deal with an internal resistance to continuing to pursue their plans concerning social rights in Europe, those who gain will be the citizens. In Belgium they were a year and a half without government and all the indicators improved. Because there was no government to implement the austerity measures that cut wages and that leave people unable to consume. Therefore, they maintained a few minima for a year and a half. And I would not say that there is no government. In addition, the regional government is in office.

To what extent does Podemos look to the general elections and can you influence the voting in the municipal and regional pacts?

In our case no. In Andalusia we have had very clear conditions from the start, since the meeting in San Telmo after the regional elections. We are now bound to our words. We cannot now change our approach. Among other things, because no one has told us what we can or cannot do. We haven't even managed to persuade our socialist interlocutors to respond on whether we can close some of the Junta's bank accounts.

Do you think that the PSOE has kidnapped the Parliament?

There is a certain desire that the Parliament does not work. But anyway, from what I see here every day, I have the impression that it has never been especially proactive. We hope that when the commissions are set up they will be places of intensive work. For us it is so unusual to be members who want to show intensive dedication to a task of the first level, as is to legislate for nine million inhabitants. I am surprised to see the Parliament empty and the lack of basic rules of respect that there is in the plenary sessions. I believe that there is little respect for the Parliament in general. Right now we are meeting with groups that have disputes with the Junta of Andalusia.

You have said that before entering the Parliament it is necessary to deal with the “seduction of the institutions”. What do you mean?

It is very important to do that - among other things, because the people require me to do so. When they look at me in the street, on the bus or train they want me to begin to do things for the Andalusians, that we resolve the situation and that we continue to work. This means that you will not forget. It is easy to settle in this space, because it is a place of recognition, suddenly you're the “honourable member”, working in a nice place, the people in the street know you because you appear in the media ... I believe that it is relatively easy to settle in and not understand that what we're doing here is exceptional for the citizens. To manage collective life is a very special opportunity that has been given to us.

Are you concerned about the threats from Susana DÃ-az to call new elections in Andalusia if you do not support their investiture?

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No, but we want to continue talking and it amazes us that the PSOE does not want to do so. Resuming the dialogue is serious, sensible and mature. The rest is just game playing.