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Spanish State

# **Podemos-PSOE agreement: a historic error!**

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**The Cortès of Castilla-La Mancha (CLM) has three parliamentary groups: that of the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Espa ol), with 15 deputies, that of the PP (Partido Popular) with 16 and that of Podemos with 2. Podemos's support is indispensable for the adoption of the budget or of any law if the PP is opposed. The two Podemos deputies are the regional secretary Jos  Garc a Molina, favourable to entry into government and David Llorente, a member of the Anticapitalistas current of Podemos, who opposes such an entry.**

CLM is the third biggest autonomous community in the Spanish state. It is very rural, with a population slightly above 2 million. Faced with an inability to get their budget passed, the PSOE, on July 13, 2017, invited Podemos to enter the government, offering two posts, including that of vice-president.

From July 21-24, Podemos CLM conducted an electronic vote for its 15,000 supporters in CLM., with a single question on two subjects, the adoption of the budget and entry into government. Some Podemos supporters in CLM, including the Toledo circle, criticised the voting procedure on the grounds that there had been no time for debate, the information had been insufficient and that there should have been two separate questions on the adoption of the budget and participation in the regional government. The result of the plebiscite was 3,562 (77.98%) votes for Yes and 1,006 (22.02%) for No.}

We have seen in the last week a profound turn by the Podemos political leadership, towards a dynamic of governmental agreements with the PSOE, of which the entry into the government of Castilla-La Mancha provides the first experimental test. The PSOE in Castilla-La Mancha is perfectly similar to the clientelist parties which have controlled the state apparatuses of Andalusia and Extremadura for decades.

Beyond this concrete case, the meetings held on July 17th in the legislature between the two leaderships seem to seal the new political line, to the extent that this meeting has been characterised as "prefiguring an alternative government". The re-invention of PSOE leader Pedro S nchez as a figure of the left opposed to the PSOE apparatus smacks of a manoeuvre of political marketing. It provides no solid bases for abandoning the interpretation maintained over the last period on the nature of the PSOE.

We don't know if one day another PSOE will exist (of course, the more this party receives the institutional oxygen to conserve its current structures and modes of functioning, the less this is possible). What is clear to us on the other hand is precisely what this political formation represents today. The PSOE is not exactly a political party, it is more an appendage of the state, and not just any state, but the model of political organisation of the Spanish social formation that we characterize as the regime of 1978.

The PSOE resembles more a ministry than a political organisation of "transformation". A policy of generalised agreements of government, with a relationship of forces favourable to the PSOE, thus means accepting to be transformed into the left wing of the regeneration of the regime, and to shore up the very elements where the political crisis manifested itself in May 2011.

It is perhaps necessary to recall that the PSOE is the party of permanent disillusion. The historic disappointments are so numerous that recounting them in detail would require an entire book. It should be enough to recall that the initial event of the current political cycle, the mobilisations on May 15, 2011, emerged following the indignation provoked by the "socialist" government of Jos  Luis Rodr guez Zapatero.

Until then, the captive vote for the PSOE was informed by the bipartisan logic of the PP versus PSOE binary. That is, logic dictated that in the absence of other electoral choices, any reaction against a right wing government would be capitalized by the useful vote for a nominally left party. A useful vote and a vote of sanction – distanced from any perspective of political construction of a different order – which fed off the hope that a simple change of faces would give oxygen allowing an electorate discontented with the actions of the right to breathe for a while. All this as an unstoppable crisis of representation grew and, under the form of a “held nose” vote or abstention, reproduced the disillusionment of broad layers of the population, generally the most exploited and dominated.

When the need to “keep out the PP” at no matter what price is invoked as a definitive argument for entry without criteria into governments alongside the PSOE, it is precisely accepted as an inevitable fact that Podemos should participate in this dynamic of de-alignment and crisis of representation in exchange for some posts inside the state apparatus.

Beyond the political disdain supposed by the acritical acceptance of this position in the territories where the PSOE appears as much of a central adversary as the PP, if not more, like Andalusia, it is a policy with nothing new about it – the old Izquierda Unida devoted itself to exactly this for many long years, with political results which are well known.

It is ironic to note that the very people who howled against the left-right political axis rally without any major problem to the worst version of the latter, which was institutionalised by the regime of 1978: the PP-PSOE-“crutch on its left” axis.

All this stems from a rhetoric of government according to which only taking positions inside the state can guarantee any kind of transformation. A position which, as can be seen in municipalities like Madrid, faced with the imposition of the budgetary corset, disdainfully underestimates the autonomous and radically undemocratic force of the state institutions, so as to mark off its own oligarchical political agenda to those who accede to these institutions without the counterweight of a sufficiently strong political movement. Without even mentioning the obstruction practiced by the socialist groups in the municipalities of “change”.

It is in this sense a false move which, far from finishing off the neoliberal political guidelines of the state, will oblige Podemos to adopt them. For the PSOE, this is not a problem: it has already done it many times. For Podemos, this would condemn the formation to political insignificance and in the worst of cases implosion, which would clear the road to a new political landscape, in a context of world political instability, favouring the implantation on our territory of the same type of reactionary political formations laying waste to half of Europe.

One of the political phantoms which has reappeared in recent days to justify the turn towards agreements with the PSOE is that of the “government of progress”. We should not forget that barely five years ago, we had just such a government of progress, that of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. It should also be remembered how it ended, clearing the road in electoral terms for a PP absolute majority and, in social terms, to the political insurrection of 15M, which allowed the birth of Podemos.

The first years of this government were marked by the coexistence of cultural wars and advances in civil rights on the one hand, and on the other by complete agreement on the economic model of the financial bubble at the very base of a system of corruption visible for some years in Spain, linking the banking, political elite and state functionaries at various levels as well as the entrepreneurs, a network with “mafia” traits. All this with its innumerable ramifications at different levels of the state, imposed in Spain by the European neoliberal order.

It was, in the last instance, this tolerance towards the neoliberal order which led to the greatest social and economic crisis in Spain in decades. At this time the political leaders of “Zapaterismo” affirmed that “the forces were not there”

to think of a change of model.

It is obvious that there is objectively little room to imagine that a government, in these subordinated conditions, could be capable of going beyond the lines of the continental neoliberal forces which underlie the economic policies imposed by the EU. It is precisely the view that “the forces are not there” which seems to constitute the basis of the positions of the Podemos leadership on the agreements of government with the PSOE.

A certain sentiment of defeat, declared hastily, lies behind this political turn. This option – which tacitly assumes that Podemos has reached its ceiling and new advances in “democratic transformations” are no longer possible, apart from the fact that it is in line with the these advanced by Errejón, nominally defeated at Vista Alegre 2 – develops all the political and organizational faults forged by Íñigo Errejón and Pablo Iglesias at Vista Alegre 1.

This Podemos, forging a verticalist model, renounces the possibility of constructing a strategic horizon; that is a series of medium and long term objectives based on the interests of the broad social layers which have opposed the regime over the last few years. Instead, the Podemos leadership is following a short term tactic, whose most disastrous expression is the general agreement with the PSOE. If anything is “exhausted” it is this model of political orientation based on a very short term approach.

As we have clearly stated in the document “Podemos en Movimiento”, presented at Vista Alegre 2, we do not believe that the cycle is exhausted. The context of political turbulence and economic slowdown across the whole world is ineluctable. It is precisely the political forces who have remained in the spectrum of what was the political centre, including its “progressive” variant, who are today being pitilessly punished electorally.

In Spain, what is passed off as a “recovery” is nothing other than a crystallisation of the social, economic and ecological crisis. It is not about simply maintaining a passive position – other paths can be explored with other political forces, including the PSOE, which do not involve entry into government, on the basis of punctual agreements up to partial accords on matters which correspond to the programmatic principles of Podemos. And, of course and above all, to continue the construction of a real political, economic and social alternative to the forces of the regime of 1978 and to the financial powers that this regime first and foremost represents.

In this context, to capitulate before bipartisanship, to accept being its “left” crutch through the recomposition of the left wing of the regime, would help to close from above the political conjuncture in which the foundation of Podemos took place, and would represent an authentic political disaster.

*PS:*

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