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Spanish State:

A fresh breach in a worn-down regime

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Information about corrupt politicians is invading daily life in the Spanish state. This comes on top of the devastating effects of neo-liberal policies; rising levels of unemployment and debt, downward pressure on wages, the emigration of young people...

The media revelations are multiplying after the discovery of millions of euros in Swiss accounts belonging to the former treasurer of the Partido Popular (PP, the main party of the Right, in power in Madrid), Luis Bárcenas, who is accused of tax offences and bribery. Barcenas had already been at the centre of several corruption scandals linked to top leaders of the PP. There have also been revelations of additional salaries undeclared to the tax authorities by leaders of the party, including the current Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. There is widespread public indignation over this.

But, even more, reduction of public services is being accompanied by privileges granted to private companies related to PP members, who are taking advantage of privatization. It is the same story in regions run by the PSOE (social-democrats), where companies related to personalities in the party manage the outsourcing of services by the public administration. In addition, the huge sums paid to the banks in order to save them are combined with tax exemptions for those on high incomes. Corruption is an element of this maze of privileges, where sections of the financial and industrial bourgeoisie merge with the political caste.

A parasitic system

Accumulation through dispossession, fueled by the constant expropriation of the working classes referred to by David Harvey, demonstrates some peculiarities in the Spanish state. Among other things, the existence of a model of urbanism that is based on speculation and plays a predatory role on the environment. This model has glorified individual enrichment and the selling-off of the natural heritage and has been a source of enrichment for city councils and networks of property developers, estate agents, banks and political parties. This policy of "enrich yourselves" has led to legalized political corruption.

It is therefore not enough to denounce the immorality of some political leaders or to demand that they resign and call for new elections. We must denounce the whole parasitic logic of neoliberal policies and their cultural matrix, the looting of public goods for private profit. It is also true that, as regards institutional corruption and the management of the debt, sackings and the question of public services, the question is "who decides?" We need a Left that puts at the centre of things the question of breaking with this system.

Overturn the institutional consensus

In the face of the neo-liberal offensive, the defensive reaction of the working class is very strong and the development of political consciousness is very limited. This benefits populist currents, such as UPyD, and the reformist Left (Izquierda Unida, a coalition around the Spanish Communist Party) who are now involved in many municipal and regional governments (in Catalonia a few years ago and now in Andalusia), in alliance with the PSOE, where they apply austerity policies.

A fresh breach in a worn-down regime

But the bipartisanship of the PSOE-PP, joint architects of the economic architecture of the speculative bubble, is wearing thin. The institutional consensus is cracking, as well as the legitimacy of all the institutions that came from the Francoist system and from the Constitution of 1978, from the judiciary to the Crown. This crisis is accelerating with the national question in the Basque country and Catalonia, where the attacks against public services are accelerating the tensions in the territorial model.

We have to start from struggles in order to forge alliances with sectors capable of developing a political alternative, putting the accent on the overturn of all the institutional architecture in the service of the economic and political oligarchy.

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