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Spanish state

Podemos – governmental force or framework of struggle?

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An activist of Izquierda Anticapitalista, Teresa Rodriguez was elected as a member of the European parliament (MEP) for Podemos in May 2014. This interview was given to Manu Bichindaritz of the NPA's newspaper *l'Anticapitaliste* in late August 2014.

How is Podemos building itself five months after the European elections?

The main task is to build a political organisation with political principles, and democratic rules of functioning, combining rank and file self-organisation and the ability to integrate the broad masses in its functioning. We have on the one hand more than a thousand self-organised circles and more than 100,000 “members” who have joined by internet. The challenge is to create a democratic organisation capable of basing itself both on its organised base and on the massive participation of people on internet.

This is a process that will end in mid-November, after a two month process that we call the “Podemos citizens’ assembly”. This work is done in parallel with the beginning of an institutional intervention by the members of the European parliament.

How can this European work aid anti-capitalists?

In the first place we should be the voice of the social movements in the institutions. Thus I work in the environment commission of the Parliament, together with around fifty ecologist movements, to denounce attacks on the environment and support these movements to win victories. For example on toxic waste in lakes.

Also as an MEP one has access to information which makes it possible to anticipate future attacks, and the mobilisations necessary. Thus, we have denounced the secret negotiations concerning the trans-Atlantic treaty as one of our first acts in the European parliament. The third aspect is to denounce from the inside an institution which defends finance and the banks.

What are the current debates in Podemos?

Does Podemos want to be solely a governmental force, for power, or also a framework for mobilisation and struggle? The debate is located in the tension between the ambition of coming to power by electoral means, and not being too precise on demands, and the need to specify our programme and what we stand for. For a section of the leadership, the risk is that if we specify too many things we could lose votes.

For us, it is also necessary to strengthen the power of the local circles. This isn’t an ethical or democratic question. We are opposed to those who think that digital participation via the internet is enough, rather than the direct democracy of the circles. The internet cannot replace physical contact between people to build solidarity and interventions.

What orientation does Izquierda anticapitalista (IA) have towards Podemos?

We think Podemos is the political expression of a deep discontent with the current system and a desire for radical change through self-organisation and the massive entry of people onto the political scène. From this point of view we

defend a party which is rooted in the popular layers and struggles, and which is a tool of popular self-organisation.

IA can bring to Podemos a certain experience of our insertion in the social movement, and we do so in a very generous and disinterested fashion. The political current that IA represents has yet more to contribute inside Podemos. In any case, we will determine our policy concerning Podemos at our next congress in late 2014- early 2015.

In Catalonia there will soon be an important referendum. What are the positions of Podemos on the national question in the Spanish state?

There is no ambiguity on this subject. Podemos defends the right to decide on all questions: national, economic and social sovereignty. In this context, Podemos defends the right to self-determination. This was a position clearly expressed by the movement.

In Catalonia, Podemos supports the process which leads to the referendum of November 9, with a critical position in relation to the ruling CiU because they defend budget cuts and austerity. The only country the CiU has is money.