

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2392>



Spanish state

Spanish state: victory for the right, major crisis looms

- IV Online magazine - 2011 - IV442 - November 2011 -

Publication date: Tuesday 22 November 2011

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights
reserved

The expected defeat of the Socialist Party (PSOE) in Spain's elections on November 20, 2011 was not as heavy as had been predicted. The Spanish electoral system is far from proportional and projects deformed images which strongly distort reality. In terms of number of seats the elections can be seen as a "historic victory" for the Popular Party, the conservative right of Francoist origin. The PP increased its representation from 153 deputies at the 2008 elections to 186 seats, a crushing absolute majority. Certainly, the right galvanised and mobilised its traditional electorate which indisputably included popular layers. However this was not a "blue tidal wave": the PP only increased its vote by slightly over 600,000 votes on the scale of Spain as a whole. No, the shift to the right of the parliamentary majority is due to the undoubted collapse, heavy with consequences, of the PSOE. In terms of deputies the setback for the socialists is crushing: 169 seats in 2008, only 110 in 2011. But it is above all when one compares votes received that it is possible to grasp the extent of the disaster: the PSOE lost more than 4,000,000 votes in relation to the previous general election.

Thus the economic crisis shaking Europe has swept aside another government. This time, certainly a social liberal one – Zapatero has paid the price for his unkept promises and his alignment with the injunctions of the financial markets and the institutions of the European Union. With five million unemployed, a ravaged property market and banks supported by public bailouts, the austerity measures taken since May 2010 (freezing of pensions, wage reductions in the civil service, budget cuts, and pensions counter reform) have only led to the disaffection of the left electorate, while the country sank into recession and the social situation visibly worsened. The two traditional socialist bastions of Andalusia and Catalonia moved to the right. In Catalonia, which played a decisive role in Zapatero's two victories, the socialists were beaten by the right nationalist CiU which headed the poll with a discourse mixing appeals to Catalan sovereignty in tax matters with populist complaints against immigration. In the spring, CiU had already taken the Barcelona municipality, a fiefdom of the left for more than thirty years, from the Socialists, after having also won the regional government, previously held by the plural left. The Generalitat is now in the first rank of neoliberal attacks on public services.

Izquierda Unida made significant electoral progress, going from 2 to 11 deputies, with a net increase of more than 700,000 votes. With a critical and anti-neoliberal discourse, the IU scooped up part of the Socialist vote. (However, another part, notable above all in Madrid, drifted to right wing options). The impact of the movement of indignad@s also favoured the IU, which appeared as the "useful vote" to the left of the PSOE. The attempt to launch a green project, inspired by the example of Europe Écologie, has foundered. But the pressure for a "useful vote" was also felt among the sectors targeted by the "Anti-capitalists" candidacy, promoted, alongside other forces and activists, by the organisation of the Fourth International in the Spanish state. A bold campaign, calling for disobedience and punctuated by symbolic bank, stock market and ministerial office occupations, leading to legal action against our head of list for Barcelona, Esther Vivas - allowed the popularisation of an alternative programme and a detectable activist breakthrough. (The "Anticapitalists" received nearly 25,000 votes in the few provinces where the candidacy was able to surmount the restrictions imposed by the electoral law).

Victory, then for a right intent on redoubling the anti-social attacks, Yet recent weeks have seen significant mobilisations around schools in Madrid, a general strike in Barcelona's universities on the electoral level, Amaiur, the candidacy of the Basque pro-independence left, erupted on the scene with its own group in the Spanish parliament. Meanwhile the 15-M movement is far from over. In the context of the international crisis, a scenario of intense social and political conflicts is on the horizon. A new configuration of a combative left will be more than ever on the agenda.