

The victory of PSOE and interesting readings in between rallies

The success of the Socialist Party (PSOE) in the Spanish general election is without a doubt very good news for European social democrats, who have been in recent times in an almost chronic state of discouragement due to the poor electoral results of the last years. Proof of this is the uncontained joy with which its adherents have welcomed the results of Sunday's election, starting with their candidate to lead the European Commission, **Frans Timmermans**.

It may be true that a victory in one single country doesn't necessarily mean a change of trend in the broader European Union, especially if it isn't met with other countries that back the hypothesis that the winds are changing in various places at the same time.

However, the reality is that since last September we have started to observe signs that support the existence of this trend, among which it is worth highlighting the victory – albeit by a small margin – of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, corroborated later by their capacity to converge with part of the centre-right in order to stop the extremists from reaching a government-enabling majority, as well as the first-place (again by a small margin) obtained by the Social Democratic Party of Finland which will lead a coalition government, to which we may add the positive results expected in Denmark and Portugal, who will hold elections over the course of this year.

In this particular case, the social democrats have won clearly, by a large margin, and they have done so in one of the 'big four' countries of the Eurozone. The added value of this achievement is that the transmission of the results has overcome national and linguistic barriers (very few people heard about the results in Sweden and Finland, for instance), making headlines and appearing in the front covers of newspapers all across the EU.

Nevertheless, the significance at a European level of the PSOE triumph isn't to do only with the geographic and demographic size of Spain, but also because it was achieved in the face of a radicalized centre-right (Partido Popular) and a far-right (Vox) that entered the stage with ambitious electoral expectations for the first time since Spaniards recuperated a democratic system, employing a narrative that is reminiscent of the fascist past and with a marked Eurosceptic tone.

Facing these challenges, the Spanish social democrats have won running on a distinctly pro-European electoral platform that has proved attractive not only for traditional leftist voters, but also the centrists that don't identify with the divisive Ciudadanos campaign strategy, along with their intention to reach the government by replicating the coalition that took place in Andalusia, with the ineluctable support of the far-right.

It is probably in this particularity that lies the most important lesson for the European social democrats: it is perfectly possible to be the most voted party without renouncing to their postulates, provided that they are able to offer voters a hegemonic project that even people who aren't ideologically on the left can identify as a national program which aims to favour the interests of an overwhelming majority of working citizens, in the broadest interpretation of the term.

This necessarily means avoiding at all costs embracing the 'Third Way' that so many voters who identify with the left rightly rejected as a neoliberal transformation of social democratic parties, while at the same time taking distance from various proposals coming from the populist left-wing parties. It is this way that PSOE has managed to galvanize voters to the right of its spectrum (Ciudadanos)

and to its left (Unidas Podemos), simultaneously activating its electorate to ensure that no progressive vote would be left behind through abstention.

The national electoral cycle faces now a second round, in which the PSOE will have to apply the same idea in order to complete its victory, since in a federal country as Spain it is fundamental to hold the key to cities and regional parliaments. Likewise, a PSOE victory will contribute to forming a European Parliament capable of acting as the vanguard of the European Union's political integration.

In the course of the following days and weeks, reading through the writings of **Antonio Gramsci** or **Arthur Rosenberg** may prove to be useful for PSOE candidates who seek a constructive moment of reflection in between rallies... and also for candidates of those parties that lost the election.

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