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The Abertzale Left has examined the current situation and the Basque political process. It has debated. Not among few people or in a dark room. On the contrary, we have brought the debate to the assembly room of our supporters and social base. It has been a democratic exercise; a useful democratic exercise which will also serve to define our political strategy.

It has not just been a debate. In the meanwhile, the Abertzale Left has been active in and has influenced the political situation. We could not stay at home isolated waiting for problems to suddenly solve themselves. We had to be among the people and involved in the debate, we had to drive forward initiatives. In the end, in order to implement effective strategies, the Abertzale Left has had to clarify its political position and its activity. That's why since the very beginning of the current political period we started to define our political position with concrete proposals and actions. And we will continue working in that way over the coming months. We alone have the responsibility to face it.

Time needs to be understood in political terms. The challenges are established by the political and social conditions of the moment. Nowadays, the conditions to move forward exist, achieved after a huge effort. That is why we are moving forward now. The presentation of the document "Clarifying the political phase and the strategy" and the launching of the Declaration of Altsasua has been a response both to the internal reflection and a drive for steps to be made in the political process. Both documents have been reaffirmed with the very broad support of our social bases, taking into account that different opinions are part of the Popular Unity. The Abertzale Left believes that the discussion opened by the document "Clarifying the political phase and the strategy" and the Declaration of Altsasua has shown clearly the will of the Abertzale Left to achieve political change and to be part of the democratic process.

In fact, thanks to this debate, we have seen what we have to do, what we did correctly and also what mistakes we have made. Hereby, we confirm the political position and activity until now. But we have also made a deep self-criticism. With our mistakes and achievements, we have managed to bring the liberation process towards political change. Now, our challenge is to make real change irreversible. This political change also requires that we change ourselves.

The Basque Country and the Basque citizens, foundations of the liberation movement

The Basque Country. Basque citizens. Basque women and men. Basque society. Those are the only points of reference in our approach to political action. The Abertzale Left commits itself to work among the people and citizens, to take their ideas and wishes as our reference, to respect the will of the Basque Country and ensure that is respected by others.

It is time for commitments. It is time to move forward. At this moment, the Abertzale Left is conscious that the key is not waiting to see what other political actors do, rather to act ourselves. In this sense, our strength and our arguments will create new situations, has the potential to condition the behaviour of others and, even more importantly, will more and more increase the support for a liberated Basque Country.

The current political challenge has been our decision because it is the effective way to move forward with the liberation process and it responds to the wish of our people. Our decisions

must always be the result of our will and the people's wishes, not obliged by something else nor a result of the will of someone else.

The repression and injustice that the states have used will never be part of the political project of the pro-independence left. We are not like them, neither when we face savage repression nor when we try to oppose to the assimilation of our people. We were never so and we will never be.

We give our word. We will not miss the opportunity, nor betray the hope and the conditions created over the years, to achieve a democratic situation. In that sense, the recent popular mobilisations have shown clearly that there is a critical mass in order to channel the democratic process by political means. Furthermore, the Abertzale Left can affirm that other political actors, in the Basque Country and at international level, are ready to travel this road together, each based on its own decisions. The whole Abertzale Left has to create conditions in order to make this process strong. We will not let our history down. We will not let our people down.

Starting today we have to win our future. The opportunity for independence is open. In Europe, states have been created and the debate is totally open in some places. The creation of new states is a realistic prospect as long as there is the capacity to define strong democratic majorities. The Basque Country is a well organized country, dynamic and prepared, with sufficient political maturity and with strong political, social and economic bases. More than anything else, we have total confidence in our people.

Political precedents, reasons to be confident

50 years ago, the Basque Country was nearly dying and during this time, thanks to the struggle, we have managed to make possible the creation of a Basque state. Now, having overcome the political operation designed after the death of Franco – which had the assimilation of the Basque Country as its goal - we are in the first stage of achieving a democratic framework

During decades, we have achieved many partial victories and have made steps forward. Moreover, responding to attacks from the states, we have managed to develop our political position. We have opposed the intention to destroy the pro-independence movement, and in the meanwhile we have been able to open and win debates and place concrete ideas and proposals at the heart of the political landscape.

It has not been an easy way. Suffering has been the horrible consequence of this long cycle of political conflict and armed confrontation. Even though some would like to deny it; the origin of this suffering is obvious: the denial of the rights of the Basque Country. This has created the political conflict, and the security response has encouraged it. Our priority is to overcome this situation.

These years, the Abertzale Left has done a huge amount of work. We have formulated the new political phase based on the confidence given by the path and political logic used in that work. Our history and our arguments are the grounds of our self confidence.

The political phase, the phase of change

The political phase we are in is coming to the end, and that, obviously, gives our national and social project an historical opportunity. The situation in the Basque Country is defined by the opportunities for political and institutional change. These opportunities both in the south and north of the Basque Country are different in form and intensity.

It is true that the situation of political blockade is getting longer than we expected and that has happened mainly because the states have decided to prioritise the use of security measures. Therefore, and precisely in the south of the Basque Country, we continue to be at a crossroads between political cycles: Between a political cycle coming to an end and a new political cycle not yet fully defined. The current main political battle is on the direction and form of the new cycle which is opening.

The Abertzale Left is convinced that a deep political change is now possible, overcoming the existing cycle of autonomy. The opportunity for a democratic scenario is totally open. Consequently, the challenge, now, is to use the opportunity opened following decades of struggle to achieve the political change. There are sufficient conditions to do it. The key issue is to benefit from these conditions and to establish an effective strategy to achieve this political change.

In the north of the Basque Country, Paris retains a total denial and maintains an aggressive approach. But popular mobilisations on institutional demands, defending the Basque language, national building or for social change have shown the will to live of this people and their determination to achieve its recognition.

The bases for the recognition of the territoriality of the Basque Country are well rooted in the societies of the provinces of Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa and Zuberoa. Opposing Paris, through accumulations of forces, we must open a new phase to win the institutional recognition of the three provinces and respect the wishes and decisions of the Basque Country.

The political phase is the phase of political change. Indeed, the existence of conditions for change means that the change must be realised. Thus, the goal of this political phase is to achieve a political change; achieve a democratic scenario with sufficient bases for the establishment of a Basque state.

The democratic process, lever for a change of cycle

The democratic process is the lever for the change of cycle and the basic tool of the political phase. This process has to be articulated based on negotiation, political agreement and People's participation. The correct development of such a process is the only way for a change of the political framework

It is time to define the democratic process. And the democratic process has a very clear goal: Once the Gordian knots of the self determination and territoriality are untied, a democratic framework can be built. This democratic framework has to make it possible to realise all political projects, including the pro-independence project that we support. The political result to be achieved by the democratic process is a decisive political agreement among the different forces in the Basque Country which the states will be obliged to respect. On the other hand, the main actors to begin the process, to drive it forward, to ratify agreements and to take the final decisions concerning our internal structure and foreign relations are the Basque citizens and the Basque Country.

As the Declaration of Altsasua states, the activation of the democratic process is a unilateral decision of the Abertzale Left. Despite problems, the democratic process must be the challenge we will have to face without any way back. In order to develop it, bilateral, multilateral agreements; with Basque political actors and the international community have to be found. Agreements must also be found with the states In order to solve the on going conflict.

Consequently, deliberately and with self confidence, together with other political forces and in opposition to powerful interests the Abertzale Left can already anticipate three stages in the

activated democratic process concerning the south of the Basque Country. And in the north of the Basque Country we must build up a new political balance towards Paris with the support of the society. Those are the three stages:

- **Minimum democratic bases.** These are the democratic basics which will enable a development of the democratic process. Agreements and decisions concerning equal rights among the parties should be guaranteed and exceptional political measures ended.
- **Democratic agreement.** Agreement should be developed on the basis of the recent negotiation process. i.e.: recognition of the Basque nation, a guarantee that it is possible to realise all political projects and the definition of political/juridical ways to change the relation between the Basque territories – among them and with the state.
- **Democratic framework.** It should be based on the juridical and political implementation of the democratic agreement. It should be created by the willingness of the people and should guarantee the overcoming of the structural denial of the Basque Country. The efforts of the Abertzale Left to achieve the right to decide are based on the one hand on the “Anaitasuna proposal” for autonomy for the four provinces in the South of the Basque Country, and on the other hand the “Ustaritz proposal” towards the creation of autonomy for the three provinces in the North of the Basque Country.

New strategies and tools, the means to go forward

We face a new phase and we require new strategies and tools. In order to achieve political change, it is absolutely necessary to channel an increasingly broader accumulation of forces and to drive the confrontation forward to where the states are weaker: to the political field.

The outcome of the debate has guided all forms of activity in favour developing the challenge that the new political phase will bring; in favour of the accumulation of forces that the new cycle demands. Thus, the only tools of the democratic process, having as its goal the accumulation of forces, will be the mass, institutional and ideological struggle, the change in the balance of forces and the achievement of international support. Popular support will be the only guarantee and the popular movement the most effective tool.

The democratic process must be developed in the complete absence of violence and without interference. Dialogue and negotiation among the political forces should be governed by the principles of Senator Mitchell. No-one will use force or threaten the use of force in order to influence the course or result of the multiparty negotiations nor to try to modify any agreement which results from them.

The democratic process will have to bring greater popular support, struggle, accumulation of forces and organisation. Thanks to them, it will be possible to achieve partial goals and create initiatives: to achieve minimum democratic freedoms and to make steps to release the political prisoners, renew national construction and the national structure, strengthen the international political offensive and drive forward the political negotiation.

The strategy we are setting out has concrete areas of work. It is practical and opens the opportunities to take new steps. Gathering forces in favour of independence and sovereignty, speeding up dynamics for the political prisoners and democratic freedoms, channelling the tools and initiatives in order to develop the democratic process – and concretely to reinforce the field of negotiation - and strengthening the Abertzale Left are our main political tasks. Developing and defining them will be the practical and theoretical task of the coming months.

We believe national construction and the democratic process are linked. National construction has also a special importance in the current political phase. In fact, it will be the tool to accumulate forces and keep the process going in the correct direction. We have to place national construction in the change of cycle. Furthermore, the change of cycle has to facilitate the way to improve national construction together with the work in the popular movement and the institutions. National construction should also enter in a new phase.

The Abertzale Left wants to add social change to political change, because that is the way to guarantee them. Political change without social change will be incomplete and social change without political change is impossible. Therefore, and moreover confronting the injustices imposed by neo-liberalism, the left struggle we have to develop has to facilitate the political change taking the right direction and the accumulation of popular and worker forces. The work to be done by trade unions is fundamental.

The pro-independence left want a social change and its achievement requires the energy of the popular movement, feminist praxis, a new language policy, new education systems, the work of cultural actors and the strengthening of the youth movement.

In order to move forward in this political challenge, the Abertzale Left will need a legal political party to work at a political and institutional level as well as to be part of the political parties' negotiation table for a definitive resolution of the conflict.

Therefore, and independently of the name and legal structure it will have, the Popular Unity will be the reference for all socialist and pro-independence people in all the Basque Country in the coming political activity, to develop the democratic process, in mass-mobilisation, ideologically and at the institutional level.

Abertzale Left

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