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Parity government

NEVER HAS this country had so many women in the Cabinet, nor in positions of such importance as that of deputy prime minister. This is the most visible novelty in the new Executive of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, officially completed yesterday, and scrupulously respecting the promise of parity (eight men and as many women). The list combines the presence of politicians and managers, juniors and seniors, party members and independents, and seems to lean towards persons with experience in regional government, or with a profile of professional efficacy.

Zapatero had been reproached for lacking an effective team, but his networking efforts during 2003 resulted in a team entrusted with writing his electoral program, and more recently a "committee of notables," entrusted with the task of preparing initiatives for the first hundred days of government. Six of the ten members of this committee will be ministers: Bono, Sansegundo, Solbes, Álvarez, Calvo and Moratinos. Another of the 10, Miguel Sebastián, will continue as Zapatero's economic advisor, but now in the Moncloa prime ministerial residence.

Four other ministers come from the party Executive that emerged from the 35th convention of the PSOE: López Aguilar, Narbona, Sevilla and Montilla. The last of these, apart from the Industry, Tourism and Trade portfolio, will have the delicate responsibility of ensuring a non-conflictive relation with the Catalan tripartite coalition government. In Felipe González's first government there were also four ministers from the party leadership: Guerra, Solana, Maravall and Almunia. The last of these will take over from Solbes in the European Commission.

Pedro Solbes, a senior minister who already served as such with González, assumes responsibility for economic policy. He starts from conditions much more favorable than those of 1982, when a proper welfare system had to be built in a situation of an economic slump. Solbes' favorable stance toward a balanced budget is a guarantee that the same mistakes will not be committed that frustrated other experiences of leftist governments in Europe.

For the first time in our history a woman, María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, becomes deputy prime minister. Besides coordinating the non-economic ministries, she will have the responsibility for relations with other parties and with the regional governments. This is a mission which Zapatero has considered highly important, as proof of a different style of government. As for the rest, there is a notably strong presence of former regional office holders (from Extremadura, Andalusia and Castilla-La Mancha), contrasting with the absence of Basque ministers, always present in the González governments.

We may wish them wisdom and luck. Zapatero has so far had both, and it is to be hoped that in the coming years he will achieve the so far unachieved objective of political relations not being a cause for hatred and resentment.

How to fight Al Qa'ida

JAVIER VALENZUELA

Had Prime Minister José María Aznar wished to fight against the concrete expression of terrorism that shocked the world on September 11, 2001 — the Jihad of Bin Laden and Al Qa'ida — he would not have sent Spanish troops to Iraq, which had nothing to do with it. As had been pointed out by police, judges and analysts, and as was tragically confirmed by the attacks on March 11, Spain already had a front of its own on which to fight this monster: its own national territory.

What Aznar might have done was to strengthen the police and intelligence forces watching over the Islamic networks already established in Spain, while developing a policy of integrating immigrants — Muslims in particular — into the rights and duties of a democratic society. He would also have had to agree with France, Germany and the United Kingdom a European formula for the resurrection of the process of peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

This would have been sensible and patriotic. But Aznar ignored the domestic front of struggle against Islamic radicals, and joined the Iraqi crusade of Bush. This allowed him to put his feet up on the emperor's table, but it embarked Spain on a catastrophic adventure.

Though it crows about its patriotism, history shows that the Spanish right is inclined to kneel before foreign powers. Aznar joined the expedition to Iraq, forgetting that Spain has its own national interests, different from those of the Americans. Three are obvious, and all three have been damaged by Aznar: the construction of European unity, the development of relations with Latin America, and the stabilization of the Arab and Muslim world. Not to speak of having turned Spain into a frontline, and not a mere rearguard target of the Jihad.

It is hardly surprising that Bush's "war on terror" has failed, as Al Qa'ida attacks keep

happening all over the world. The mere enunciation of "terror", thus ideological and abstract, impedes what is elementary in any war: the precise definition of the enemy, the establishment of clear, attainable objectives, and the adoption of adequate methods. True, such vagueness allowed Aznar to affirm that Spain was going to Iraq to "fight against terrorism," with an knowing wink at the terrorism of ETA. While he chased shadows, a real, flesh and blood enemy nested in Lavapies (district in the center of Madrid), preparing the March

"Aznar ignored the domestic front of struggle against Islamic radicals"

11 attack.

What September 11 ought to have started was not a "conflict of civilizations," a "war against terror" or other formulas equally imprecise and useless, but a concrete fight against a concrete leader, Bin Laden, a concrete organization, Al Qa'ida, and a concrete ideology, Jihad, which has carried the use of the tool of terrorism to unknown levels of brutality and massacre.

Jihad can be fought and defeated; but by going directly for it, choosing the fields of battle well, and using all the weapons needed. We are looking at a long-term effort. Though the US tends to think of immediate satisfaction, in the shortest possible term, many years will be needed to dismantle all the networks of Al Qa'ida, and above all to uproot, both in the Arab and Muslim world and among immigrants in the West, the causes of its birth and expansion.

The global enemy has to be fought globally, and this means the use of all the resources at the disposal of democracies. Police and military resources, but also political, diplomatic, cultu-

ral and economic ones. Though on some occasions war is necessary, such as that fought in Afghanistan against the Taliban, the work of police and spies — on the ground, not just through satellites — is the best instrument to clip the wings of Al Qa'ida.

Democratic states must increase resources for their security forces, and strengthen their cooperation. Both in the American September 11 and the Spanish March 11, the failures of police and intelligence services have been huge. What to say now of Aznar's argument that Spanish participation in the Iraq war was going to win a phantasmal collaboration from the United States in the struggle against terrorism?

In the long term there is no solution other than to eradicate the causes of Islamism and Jihad. This is a huge task, but possible. It implies energetic western involvement in a solution to the problem of the Holy Land, which would give the Palestinians a viable State. Americans and Europeans must also commit themselves, thoroughly and in coordination, to democratization, economic development and social justice in the Arab and Muslim world.

As for their own territories, the western countries have to address the full integration of Muslim immigrants, and the development on their soil of an Islam compatible with the values of democracy, human rights and the equality of women.

This task will take time, energy and money. But, after all, the terrorists of 9/11 and 3/11 lived in the United States, Germany, Spain and other western countries; not in Baghdad. And they did not use weapons of mass destruction purchased in Iraq or North Korea, but hijacked American planes and stole dynamite from a Spanish mine. Bush and Aznar have been hugely mistaken.

The proponents of Jihad are not giants, but windmills. Very dangerous, but tangible.

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