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Government Participation or a third political sphere?

*The strategic and programmatic development of the Spanish Izquierda Unida (IU) along its
central conflict lines*

Introduction

The election year 2004 marks the low point of a long-term crisis of the Spanish party of the left, Izquierda Unida (IU). Both in the national parliamentary elections and in the European elections, the IU earned its worst results to date. In the aftermath of the elections there is talk of an „organic crisis“ and a necessary „new orientation“. On the other hand, re-elected chairman, Gaspar Llamazares, interprets the replacement of the right-wing conservative government as a success of the left, which in the medium term will be beneficial to the „plural left“ as a whole. ¹

With only 4.16% and 5.1% of the vote at the European and Spanish elections, respectively, including its affiliated regional parties, the IU managed to place only five deputies in the national parliament and two EU parliamentarians. The Izquierda Unida is marked by on-going strategic discussions and internal disputes concerning its alignment vis a vis both, the ruling Socialist Party, a “New Europe”, and is facing the dilemma between opposition at the national level and governmental participation at the regional level.

This study suggests that the Izquierda Unida finds itself in a lasting crisis and that there exist differing analyses of its problems; at present no coherent roadmap has been developed for the further political orientation of the party, although a dominant current appears to coalesce around the party leadership.

In order to address the decisive criteria for future development of the party, I have chosen the following structure for the text: First, I make a diagnosis of the problems of Izquierda Unida in early 2004 (a ‘double’ election year: Spanish and European elections). I then summarise, in a series of propositions, the individual conflicts and cleavages facing the party. These will be discussed in the context of the development of the Izquierda Unida. On this basis I will then try to point out the most recent internal changes and continuities within the IU, which will make up the last part of the paper. To do so, I will analyse the most recent party documents and strategic discussions. For a more thorough analysis I will also give a short overview of the position of the IU in the European context (Part II).

The scholarly research on the Spanish Communist Party/United Left cited in the reference section forms the basis of my work. I have also relied on an analysis of Spanish periodicals, in particular that of the daily, *El País*, as well as party programmes and statutes and Internet publications of the Izquierda Unida.

I. The Izquierda Unida (IU) in 2004

1. Principal Political Currents within the IU

The academic literature identifies two principal currents within the IU: the so-called Renovadores (renewers) and the Tradicionalistas (traditionalists). The first strive for a “modern left party” within the parliamentary system, seeking cooperation with diverse other groups and parties and is open to a wide spectrum of social issues and demands; in other words it is a party that is geared toward its electorate with a leftist ‘catch-all’ orientation. This current leans toward the ruling party, Partido Socialista Obrero Español, (Socialist Spanish Workers’ Party, PSOE). At this point this it is represented by the general coordinator, Gaspar Llamazares, and the group surrounding him, including the candidates in the European elections.

Within the “traditionalists” it is possible to distinguish two differing ideological currents. The first group is comprised of a more ‘orthodox’ wing (many of whom were still formed during the Franco dictatorship), which is still oriented towards classical Marxism, rejects cooperation with certain groups or sectors and represents rather firm principles, including the “interests of the workers” and a thorough societal restructuring. The other current within the “traditionalists” primarily represents the demands of the new social movements and expects that that the IU reflect this position in its concrete politics – even if this means an open confrontation with the political establishment (an example is the rejection of the EU constitution). They are represented, among others, through the Corriente Roja (‘Red’ Current), several regional groups and diverse publications.

Both of the traditionalists reject cooperation with the governmental party and defend the opinion that the legitimacy of the IU diminishes proportionally to its rapprochement to the PSOE. Only if the IU develops a distinct and credible left-wing profile, they argue, will it have a chance to remain a long-term political force in Spain.

Moreover, the European elections made it clear that the strongest party within the IU, the Partido Comunista de España (Spanish Communist Party, PCE), increasingly diverges with the leadership of the general coordinator. In particular, they favour greater participation of party members and sympathisers, as well as a more pronounced political profile, in which the issue of employment is central.

2. Political Framework

The political framework in which the United Left presently finds itself has changed considerably since the party was founded. The structure, orientation and composition of the IU until the present was dictated mainly by the PCE. With the democratic transition from the Franco dictatorship (1939-77) the PCE recognised the rules of the new parliamentary democracy, voting for the constitution (1978) which resulted in the legalisation of their party. Nevertheless, groups within

the party and part of its electorate rejected these institutions and their politics, particularly in the first years of the young democracy. This was mainly related to continuities from the Franco regime in matters of personnel (in justice, administration, police, military, church etc.) and the orientation of its politics (neoliberal). However, the Spanish state and society have changed considerably since the peak of the PCE in 1978: The classic industrial proletariat has diminished, finds itself in socially- precarious conditions and has been politically co-opted; new questions such as unemployment, education, environmental problems, migration and security stand on the agenda. The communications media have changed, expanded and have come under control of market monopolies.²

The coordinates of the party system have again shifted. During the 14 years of the PSOE government (1982-1996) the IU was not able to gain enough political capital from governmental policy, and during the last 8 years it has found itself, together with the PSOE, in opposition to the right wing conservative party, Partido Popular (Popular Party, PP). Only since March 2004 does it again face the question of whether it should critically support the PSOE or whether it can develop a profile as a left opposition party. In the meantime, the Spanish political system has further developed in the direction of a “multi-party” system with a tendency towards bipolarity between the right wing conservative PP and the social-democratic PSOE (Ramirez, cited in Heywood 1995: 174). Election results of 2004 have further reinforced this tendency – the two large parties managed to draw 84% of all votes. Moreover, all parties have lost members, something that puts them within a European trend. By contrast, the new social movements increased in size, especially in the areas of anti-globalisation, peace and environmental movements– an expression of a growing incapacity of the parties to adequately integrate these demands. A further line of conflict in Spanish politics is the continuing debate over the status of the autonomous regions and their political representation, which still exerts strong influence on the regional as well as national politics.

3. The 2004 Elections

Conditions were favourable for holding in check or counteracting the difficulties that had accompanied the United Left since its foundation in 1986 and through continuously sinking votes since 1995 (see appendix 5.1-2). The IU held its VII Congress in December 2003 and reelected Gaspar Llamazares³ as chairman of the IU coalition, who had been elected to this position in October 2000. Internal difficulties were not as apparent as they had been previously (Cambio 16, 26 December 2003, p. 26). The IU further pursued its course of opening towards a wide spectrum of the left and at least on this point, there was no noticeable conflict as had been the case in previous years (ibid.)

The party prepared for the March elections with a declared goal of ousting the conservative government of the Popular Party (PP). This goal was reached, not in the least due to the consequences of the train bombings in Madrid on March 11, 2004. However, the removal of the PP occurred in a completely different way than had been expected by the Izquierda Unida, owing in great part to the ‘utilitarian’ or pragmatic *voto útil* - the tactic of voting for the party with the greatest chances of ousting the party in power. The *voto útil* marked the campaign of the PSOE and gave it an absolute majority of votes, resulting in a loss of votes for the IU (see appendix 5.1.). The declared goal of the IU during the European elections in June 2004 was to gain back the votes that had been “lent” to the socialists and to reach a larger part of its voter potential. Neither goal was reached. The number of votes dropped dramatically from almost 400,000 (1999) to ca. 125,000. This result was compensated for by the low overall participation in the elections (46%) which made up for the losses in terms of

percentages (El País 15 June 2004). The IU continues to be in a deep crisis. Analyses of the situation and mutual recriminations started after the elections. They were at the same time often the expression of the political concepts of the different currents within the IU and their anticipation of a successful future course of the coalition. Because they constitute fundamental analyses of the situation of the IU, I will present them below as a set of propositions.

4. Propositions for the Strategic Reorientation of the IU

The following propositions regarding the development and political cleavages of the IU that I make in the following are based on the documents analysed for this study. These are claims whose validity will be re-examined in the remaining of the paper.

a. Political Identity and Social Perspectives

The IU has a problem with regard to its political identity. It continues to pendle between those who consider a systematic societal transformation to be both necessary and possible, and those that consider a pluralistic, open, identity of the left as a basis for a party which is successful, modern, and based on garnering electoral votes.

b. A New Party- and Participation Model

Until now, the IU has been influenced by the dominance of the PCE as a classic, Marxist and worker-oriented party, which is seeing its electoral and membership basis dwindle and is seeking a new model for integrating new members. The party model has increasingly been put into question. At the same time, no viable alternative has thus far emerged.

c. Internal democracy

Democratic practices within the IU are lacking, with consequences for internal representation of different currents within the party and thus for their integration. Moreover, this influences the external credibility of the party and its ability to attract voters.

d. National structure vs. regional autonomy

The IU is a centrally-operated and organised party which is situated ambiguously between competing among other regional parties of the left and its declared ambition to be a party supportive of federal structures and regional autonomy.

e. A Forum for social movements or a governmental party

The IU has been the third largest party in Spain until the present. Thus, it stands before a strategic orientation either in the direction of a pooling function for various groups of the left, including social movements and parties, together with

their social and political goals and transformational implications; or, in the direction of governmental participation, including all its contradictions and dangers, at the regional, national, and European level.

f. The relationship between societal transformation and institutional integration.

As the only actor and parliamentary representative of emancipatory movements in Spain, the IU moves in the tense relationship between its voiced demands (for example, its rejection of the EU constitution) and the systematic expectations of an institutionalised party which can finance itself primarily through state and European support.

g. Success criterion: electoral results?

The history of democratic Spain has thus far been characterised by a not unambiguous, increasingly neoliberal development model, characterised by privatisation and modernisation. While the number of marginalised, unemployed people living in precarious conditions is growing, the IU has not achieved an increase in election results. It is therefore questionable, whether a party will be able to increase its support base through electoral promises and parliamentary work, or whether (as in the period before its legalisation) it is increasingly extra-parliamentary initiatives that should become its focus.

So that the issues addressed here such as autonomy, democracy, identity and so on, may be put into context and assessed by the reader herself, in the following I will outline the most recent development of the party. I will begin with the European context, in which some of the causes and continuities of the conflicts which are important today will become apparent.

II The Izquierda Unida in a European Context

In spring 2004 the socialist government initiated a paradigm shift in Spanish foreign policy with a new cabinet, the summoning of experienced EU politicians into the foreign and economic ministries and the announcement of the “absolute priority to return to Europe and to structure Europe together” (El País, March 17, 2004). Since March 2004 and after a de facto 35-year isolation from its European neighbours during the dictatorship (1939-75), a 14-year-long European “new start” under PSOE (1982-1996) and a subsequent 8-year-old interlude of increasing orientation towards the US under the conservative government (1996-2004), Spain seems to have embarked again upon a “European course”.⁴

In order to be able to situate the development of the IU in the European comparison, I will put forward some similarities and differences to other left socialist parties in Western Europe.⁵

1. In the literature on European socialist parties, it is noticeable that until the 1980s their political position with respect to the European Community showed several clear differences in each country. The spectrum ranged from enthusiastic approval and active participation in the case of the PSOE to far-reaching rejection as in the case of the British Labour Party (Featherstone 1988:2ff.). The attitude of the communist parties cannot be interpreted as unified rejection, as is often done in the literature (Haas, in *ibid.*, p.12), but is rather the rejection of a particular form of integration (*ibid.*, p.12). This also pertains to the PCE.

2. An important criterion for the further development and identity of the Communist Parties is the impact of the dissolution of the socialist block. The consequences of this process pertain in particular to the role and legitimation of the Communist Parties themselves.

A factor distinguishing the Spanish communists from other communist parties is the early “expansion and pluralisation” of the Spanish CP through the pluralistic character of the IU. The new foundation (as in the case of many others - e.g., Germany and Italy) only took place after the dissolution of the socialist states.

Moreover, the PCE acted in a political field which had been dominated for 14 years by the uninterrupted rule of a socialist party. This circumstance was unique in western Europe. Until 2000, the relationships between the two parties at the national level were rejected by the leadership. They were thus limited to individual, personal and most often regional initiatives.

3. In the development of a new strategic course of a European Communist Party, the PCE assumed a leading role with its contribution to Eurocommunism. Together with the Italian Communist Party, the PCE is one of the protagonists of a political direction independent of Moscow. The former consider a peaceful and gradual path to communism in Europe to be feasible.

The development of the PCE is particularly marked by its former illegal status throughout four decades. During this time, confidence, secrecy, inner unity and a unified appearance was indispensable for political survival. These conditions had important implications for the internal organisation of the party (for example, democratic structures) as well as for its development after democratisation, when the uniting factor of a common enemy (the Franco dictatorship) had dispelled.

4. As party expert Juan Botella emphasises, the composition of the PCE members during the transition is not substantially different from that of other west-European communist parties: mostly young people, in their majority from the working classes (but with a strong representation of technical vocations), professionals (academics), and a limited presence of women (Botella, p. 71; cf. appendix 3).

III Foundation and Development of the Izquierda Unida

The serious crisis that began in the 1980s was followed by political splits and the incapacity of the PCE to challenge the PSOE with a left opposition stance in the socio-economic field. Thereafter, a new political constellation developed in the mid 1980s, which had a strengthening effect on the already broad Left in Spain. In order to make possible Spain’s pull-out from the NATO military alliance, the internally-divided left overcame its conflicts in order to mobilise together against the government on this central point. This process marked the birth of the Izquierda Unida. This alliance consisted not only of the segregated groups of the PCE, but also rebelling PSOE members as well as a number of other groups of a humanistic and pacifistic orientation.⁶

The 1987 European elections only led to a small increase in support for the IU. Julio Anguita, the leader of the party list from the most successful electoral province, Andalusia, was named party chairman in February 1988.

Spain expert Paul Heywood points out to this moment as the “decisive motion from a Marxist to a catch-all party” (Heywood 1994, p. 70) Through its pluralistic composition, the IU was now in a position to address a broader and more differentiated public. In addition to the dominant PCE, the alliance included the PASOC, a small group of socialists who embodied a current within the PSOE which had succumbed to future prime minister Felipe Gonzalez in the directional and

renewal conflict of 1972-74. The PCPE was a federalist association founded in 1984 by the former communist Ramon Tamames as well as small groups such as the Carlistas, the Humanistic Party and the Republican Left, including some independent individuals.

1989/91 Further Crises, New Political Conflicts

As the election results suggested a gradual recovery of the left socialist forces in Spain, real existing socialism collapsed in eastern Europe. Although Julio Anguita, party chairman at that time, disputes immediate consequences for the PCE, the party again faced three fundamental questions: the relevance of a communist party in a post-communist era, the relationship between the party leadership and its regional divisions, as well as discussions regarding the structure and direction of the future party development. (*Cambio* 16, 18 December 1989, p. 18)

On the agenda thus stood the relationships between the IU and its most important party, the PCE. Although in political statements and in interviews, party chairman Anguita stressed the continuity of communist identity (*ibid.*) and was also ready to defend it against possible changes on the part of the east European “brother parties”, in practice the IU barely distinguished itself from that of a left-oriented “catch-all party” (Heywood 1995, p. 71). In his eyes, it was the task of the PCE to be able to present theoretical, marxist analysis – and that of the IU to reformulate these into a coherent party programme.

Anguita declined the discussed option of a transformation towards an independent party, since this would contradict the fundamental character of the IU as a plural, left-wing association. He conceded, however, that with the further growth of the IU, the role of the PCE would change from a “leading” to a merely “fundamental” role for the “complete symbiotic relationship” of the two (*ibid.*, p. 73).

The two other basic questions – that of the party leadership in its relationship to the regional parties, as well as that of the IU’s positioning towards other social groups became strong points of dissent. The official line remained to allow no rapprochement to the PSOE; *de facto*, however, the representatives of the IU at the EU-level increasingly worked together with the socialists. Moreover, at the trade union level, the communist-oriented workers’ commission (Comisiones Obreras, CC.OO.) initiated closer work with the trade union close to the PSOE (the Confederación General de Trabajo, CGT).

Even more important, however, was the rapprochement among the regional IU parties and the local PSOE, particularly in Madrid, Andalusia, Catalonia and in the Basque Country, although there were strong political differences among the parties. However, the central leadership of the IU disapproved of this form of regional autonomy, since it would have undermined their central role. On the other hand, the IU also was politically committed to a more federal state. There were similar differences in most other regions, including Valencia, Sevilla and Galicia.

A further point of dispute was the relationship to the EU, something which remains a central political cleavage today. The “New Left” was in agreement with the Maastricht treaty of 1992, because it saw no real alternative to it. The chairman of the party and the “officialists” were, however, inclined against the treaty and pleaded for a referendum.

2. Finances and members

Financial regulations were first approved during the party's second congress. In 1992, further regulations were added, concerning the rights and duties of deputies, the possibility of a full parliamentary party formation with all its corresponding rights, and the organisation of working groups.

Although member parties also functioned as mediators between individuals and the IU, direct membership in the IU has since then also become possible. On the whole, membership in the IU, however, remains relatively low and, by 2000 had levelled out at ca. 65,000 members (Ramiro, p. 14), although there is great regional variation. At the same time, the proportion of PCE members has continuously decreased. It shrank from ca. 200,000 during the transition period at the beginning of 1980s to 83,000 and since then has dropped continuously, reaching a low point of 27,000 in 1999 (Ramiro, p. 14; see also appendix, 2.1-2).

3. Internal Changes; Party Positioning vis a vis the PSOE

The IU's relationship to the PSOE is one of the central cleavages determining the strategic development of the party. This has been a central point in the electoral alliance from the mid 1990s onwards, when the PSOE governmental majority became less stable and the IU increasingly asserted its role as the third largest political force in Spain until most recently. As discussed above, many points of friction with important consequences developed around this issue. Behind them is the fundamental question of whether the party would have increased its electoral chances if it moved closer to the political centre and developed into a potential governmental partner of the PSOE – as was already the case at the regional level – or whether the exact opposite is the case and the IU can only secure itself a safe place in the political landscape of Spain through open differences and criticism. Arguments can be found in favour of both positions.

4. Party Leadership and Potential Conflicts

As a result of these different ideological perceptions, it has been PCE members and functionaries, in particular, who worked toward the further ideological and organisational strengthening of their party within the IU and have thereby prevented both the potential dissolution of the PCE within the IU, which already appeared possible, as well as the new foundation of the IU as a party, rather than remaining an electoral alliance. In spite of this, both currents – that of the "renewers" as well as that of the "PCE traditionalists" – continued to exist and experienced confrontations with one another. Until now, the result has been the first contested candidate for the IU chairmanship at the general assembly in December 2000. Both candidates, Francisco Frutos and Gaspar Llamazares, were PCE functionaries. Frutos stood for the traditional role of the PCE, Llamazares for PCE representation within a strong IU (Ramiro, p. 25). Llamazares has since then also stood for the IU's careful rapprochement toward the PSOE, since the strategy to overtake the PSOE as a force of the left in the election year 1999 (at the regional and European level), at least measured by the election results, had to be unambiguously considered as failed (see appendix 1).

Until then an explicit rejection and fight against the PSOE as a party of the right had dominated. This position was revised for the 2000 elections, after the PSOE began to shift their image towards the left.

Llamazares' chairmanship marked a new era for the IU in which the approaching electoral crisis as well as the development of a new identity and strategy needed attention. At the same time, Frutos remains of decisive importance. In particular after the electoral defeats of 2004, he has rebounded politically with analyses of the PCE and direct criticism of the IU leadership (PCE 2004b, 2004c).

IV. Strategic EU Development

1. 2004 Elections

After the devastating attacks of March 11, 2004, in which over 190 people were killed by several bombs (more than were 1500 injured), the right-wing conservative government – despite all prognoses – suffered an electoral defeat three days later, whereupon the PSOE assumed the leading role in government.

With hindsight, the seventh congress of the IU in December 2003 gains special importance for the position of the IU in the Spanish and European elections. Criticism of the addenda to the party's strategy paper came from various regional parties and currents who argued that the document, elaborated in the main by the national leadership, was "more ambivalent and abstract than ever before" (see Section IV.4).

In the national elections the Izquierda Unida pursued the conservative government's replacement as its main goal. At the same time, it presented a very elaborate electoral programme with countless concrete proposals and legislative projects in all political areas (See section IV.4).⁷

At the same time, the Izquierda Unida was not able to derive political capital from the most recent developments. Most voters followed the call of the PSOE and cast a "pragmatic vote", so as to ensure that the PP would be out of power. Critics of the official IU course blamed this event on the lack of delimitation of the IU party leadership from the PSOE. As a matter of fact, the IU's positioning and comments with respect to the PSOE were far more restrained than in previous years. In official documents, there was in fact criticism of PSOE policies, for example regarding the status of the Basque Country. However, nowhere in these documents was cooperation explicitly excluded. This suggests that parts of the IU leadership assumed that cooperation with the former governmental party was thinkable and possible. Its concentration on the creation of a "third political space" does not contradict this, since it could just as well be developed in cooperation with the PSOE. The party leadership close to Llamazares interprets the overall election result in Spain in positive terms, since it translated to 3.5 Million votes for the left, and many voters had only decided not vote for the IU in order to be sure to force the Aznar government (PP) out of power (IU 2004b, p. 1). According to Llamazares, The IU simply has to consolidate further through realistic policy demands and a public presence. These declarations make clear that he no longer sees the PSOE as a potential enemy, against whom there was need to develop a distinct image, but as a part of leftist political terrain in Spain (for criticism, see V.3).

At the European elections, a direct positioning against the PSOE was not emphasised to the same degree as was the case in the March elections. However, differences are emerging concerning individual positions and practices of each party. The principles of the IU and the demands of the social movements stand in contrast to the claim of the IU to evolve as a political force "capable of ruling".

Here, a number of central points of disagreement come into focus. Especially significant are the EU constitution, the question of democracy in the EU, structural funds, in particular with respect to agriculture.⁸ The fact that the number of voters has further decreased, however, proved wrong Llamazares' claim that the electoral defeat of the IU in the Spanish elections had been due mainly to 'pragmatic' voting. A utilitarian vote had no meaning in the European elections, since no government had to be elected. The IU also pointed this out during its campaign, but suffered, nevertheless, a severe loss of votes.

2. Restructuring- the VII Party Congress

The political basis for the first months of 2004 were discussed at the party's VIIIth Congress in December 2003. Due to their central importance, I will give an overview of the central points in the document.

Organisationally, the IU is faced with another restructuring phase. Parallel to the party's foundation, structural changes require similar adaptations within the IU (IU 2003a: 42). These are primarily characterised by a strong mobilisation of the social movements, which in turn have reacted to the political changes in the country. The document alludes to a new beginning (ibid.).

The IU understands itself as an "alternative, transforming force", striving for a society different from a capitalist one (ibid., p. 43), identifying itself as "ecological, pacifist, red, green and violet" party.

It wants to enter into new political relationships and thereby restructure itself through a stronger federal orientation: in a new statute which would take account of this structure more than before. To this purpose, a new institution is to be created, giving greater attention demands of regional parties.⁹ A growing plurality is explicitly recognised and should, in accordance with the statute, enjoy greater recognition. Similarly, a new internal culture should be developed, in which constructive dialogues are strengthened for overcoming differences and conflicts (ibid., p. 45).

A deficit and therefore a necessary goal for improvement, is the public presence of the party, such as among social organisations: Strengthening the ties between the party and those active in the movements would be an important step in this direction. This includes structural changes in order to open the party towards the movements (ibid.).

Internal democratisation is also mentioned as an important change. New mechanisms should be developed, in order to integrate a larger number of party members into the policy formation process (ibid., p. 47). Concretely, this will mean the formation of a commission for conflict resolution as well as linking elections to a broader consensus consisting of an approval of at least 65% of the party (ibid., p. 48).

In the future, the financial structure¹⁰ of the IU should be designed in a more transparent way in the future. A mechanism should be found through which structurally weak regional parties also receive economic support from the federal leadership. A new financial system, that would contribute to increase efficiency is in the planning stage.

3. The New Statute

The IU thus adopted a new statute during the VIIIth Party Congress. The reasons mentioned include an attempt to make the IU more transparent and attractive for non-party members, particularly to include young people as part of the party leadership (ibid., pp. 54-55).

The principle for decision-making should be a “discussed consensus”, or at least that of a broad majority. To uphold plurality, various currents of opinion are to be recognised. Moreover, member organisations will be accorded a right for parallel membership in other bodies, as long as these do not stand in contradiction to IU principles (ibid., p. 62). To achieve gender equality, a quota applied to party positions and election lists will exist, according to which no gender may be represented by more than 60% (ibid., p. 64). To achieve greater integration of younger people, who tend to suffer from particularly high unemployment and poor perspectives, a youth quota will be introduced for the first time. At least 15% of the internal bodies and the election lists will be made up of members under 30 years.

The limited number of incumbent slots is mentioned as a problem, along with transparency and accountability; the maximal duration of incumbency during will be restricted to eight years (ibid., p. 87).

The competence of the national leadership remains intact for all national and international affairs and institutions, as well as for defining IU-guidelines; these include party alliances – “insofar as they uphold the coherence of the national project”, as well as the national party leadership (ibid., p. 68). The tasks of the regional parties are to be distributed accordingly; this includes the drawing up of electoral lists and programmes for regional elections as well as the “contribution to the economic support of the national leadership” (ibid.). They are also accorded autonomy in parliamentary work and group formation – taking into account the above-mentioned restriction.

A conflict resolution committee will exist at both the regional and national, responsible for observing democratic rights (ibid., p. 93). It is composed of up to eight members who may not hold any other party position. They are in turn elected by the party congress.

The financing of the IU is to be regulated as follows: the primary financing instance will remain in the form of state grants, as well as donations and gifts. Moreover, a minimal contribution of three Euros per party member will be charged. 25% of the money will go to the national leadership/Party, and 75% will remain within the respective parties (ibid. p. 105).¹¹

4. Criticism of the statute: ambiguity in benefit of the leadership

Together with the official document of the congress, appendices presenting a number of minority positions by other regional parties were included, formulating a far-reaching criticism of the program. Dissatisfaction concerning the ambiguity and lack of precision of positions were voiced as well as complaints about a lack of substantial contributions.

According to the Catalan faction, there has been no analysis or critical evaluation of the stages of renewal up to now (ibid., p. 162). They primarily demand a real and critical description of the present situation, in order to be able to draw consequences for further development.

The criticism of the *Corriente Roja* is also directed in a similar direction. Its supporters find fault with the analysis of the present social situation, which only makes reference to new “contradictions and challenges” in very general terms, and has no concrete policy to be developed (ibid., p. 141). They therefore demand a further document, which would make the proposals more binding. For them, the focus of the IU lies in extra-parliamentary work. Incumbency and participation should strive towards greater mobilisation and politicisation of the population, and not become a goal in and of itself (ibid., p. 140). They continue to consider the IU an ‘anti-systemic’ force.

5. The 2004 Party Programme: a Third Sphere

The main goal of the elections in the year 2004 was to replace the conservative government. Strategically, the IU aspires to establish itself as the third most significant political force in Spain. Thus, a central notion is the creation of a third sphere (*tercer espacio*), in which voters no longer have to decide between a 'pragmatic' vote and not voting at all, but have access to a new political space. It wants to create the "cultural, moral, and organisational conditions", such that citizens that have been excluded can participate actively in politics, contributing with their ideas. This is referred to as the project of "auto-institutionalisation". The IU wants to re-conquer democratic structures, whose systematic demolition it has witnessed under eight years of PP government. These should be extended and strategically integrated as electoral potential among those who, until now, have kept out of politics. Such potential would include a relatively high number of non-voters, as well as reduce the voting age from 18 to 16 years. Furthermore, the IU wants to reinforce its relationships to social movements. In central parts of its party programme, it makes a direct reference to various social movements in which the IU sees in itself the role of their institutional representative. The IU wants "to translate the approaches of alternative and critical left through its political programme and its institutions" and acknowledges social movements as the large mobilising and politicising force in contemporary Spain as well as their contribution in ousting the Aznar government.

In its 99-page programme, the IU lists a broad range of groups and organisations which have contributed to its development– with a spectrum ranging from ecological, internationalist, religious and sexual-emancipation movements to various trade unions and film or soccer associations.

The current social structure in Spain is described as characterised by "precariousness and unemployment" There is and an increasing "mercantilisation of life", leading to the degradation of political rights into a mere formality, since they become "more and more dependent on the logic of accumulation of capital" and "less and less autonomous".¹²

V. Looking ahead: present strategy discussions

1. Preliminary thoughts

Based on the above discussion of the boundaries of conflict within the party as well as the political context in which they unfold, it is now possible to turn to the short and long-term strategic options of the party which are being discussed at present.

It is important to recall the integration of the PCE into the parliamentary system through its support of the Moncloa Pact (a document preliminary to the present constitution) and its subsequent legalisation. Through the consolidation of democratic institutions, introduction of economic and political restructuring, as well as the modernisation of the Spanish society, support for parties has at the same time shifted and become lesser. This was accompanied by a further demarcation of political cleavages. The characteristic conflict lines of the Franco dictatorship vs. the democratic-left opposition, their relationship to religion (Catholicism) and to the political structure (monarchy vs. republic), have become meaningless to a large extent or have changed significantly. Occurring parallel to this was a new realignment of the Spanish party system: a strong, modern social democracy, with increasingly neoliberal policies and a strong conservative alliance. The IU

developed between these two poles. Within the party conglomerate, there began a structural shift from an authoritarian-oriented, charismatic leadership based on democratic centralism towards a person-oriented, yet collective party leadership, characterised by increasing professionalism as well growing competence and influence.

It is with this historical baggage that one must consider the most recent strategy discussions within the IU. I will first present the strategic consideration of the party leadership, which will then be put into the context of the party as well as external criticism.

2. Party Leadership: Renewal and the Option of Governing

With the electoral defeat after the national parliamentary elections and its interpretation as reinforcement for 'the left' as a whole, the party leadership remains on a "renewal" course.

In a strategic article for the prominent daily, *El País*,¹³ just a few days before the VIIth Congress of the IU in December 2003, chairman Llamazares highlighted two fundamental developments of the IU. These consisted, first of all, in the continuation of the process which began in 1986: a development from 'pure' opposition to governmental participation – explicitly, he mentions the possibility of governing in Madrid (*El País*, 16 December 2003). According to him, the current political development in Spain departs unambiguously from the "two-party system", whereby a cooperation among the left will become unavoidable. The PSOE and IU would thus have to work together in social and confederative questions (*El País*, 23 December 2003). Faced with the question of whether the IU was prepared for the realistic case of a coalition with the PSOE after the elections, he answered: "We are ready"; resistance in this point came only from the PSOE because it was of the opinion that the alternative lies more towards the political centre (*El País*, December 23rd, 2004).

Second, according to the opinion of the party leadership, there had been an expansion of the party basis from the traditional left – which primarily supported the PCE since the Franco dictatorship – towards the new social movements, especially ecology and feminism, such that the IU can now represent their concerns through its institutions (*ibid.*). Moreover, in an interview after the congress he emphasised the meaning of the restored cooperation with trade unions. An expression of this was the thundering applause that CC.OO chairman, José María Fildalgo, received from the 800 delegates for his speech at the IU congress (*El País*, 23 December 2004).

In all publicly-voiced positions of the IU after the European elections, a stronger participation of its members and sympathisers is particularly emphasised. In the daily, *El Mundo*, Llamazares presents the three phases of this strategy: in a first phase, all groups close to the IU should be asked for their opinion. The results should then be discussed and approved at an extraordinary party congress as concrete measures. In the following phase, these should be brought to a vote in a general party referendum (*El Mundo*, 16 June 2004).

3. The opposition- Criticism of the Party Leadership

Critical voices of the debate based their analyses and conclusions on various points of reference and evaluations, which I summarise in the following.

It is possible to distinguish between two strategies. A segment of party members and functionaries of the IU believe the current course bent on governmental participation under the present political conditions to be utterly wrong. According to them, under neoliberal dominance it is not possible to address the concerns and demands of the social movements in a

governmental programme. The IU should therefore continue to think of itself as a force of the left within and outside of the parliament. A second group of voices criticises the party leadership from a different perspective. As regional parties, they are dissatisfied with the dominant course of the party leadership, and see themselves as continuously constrained in their political development.

Both criticise undemocratic practices within the IU and accuse Llamazares of having created a core group around himself and thus to decree important decisions, such as the composition of electoral lists for the EU elections. The leadership of the PCE has taken an own stance within this debate and distanced itself from the IU leadership. According to them, the present problem of the IU cannot be solved “with new names and good will”. Instead, the main axes of this political line should be: labour - as central reference for every left project; a socialist feminism; ecology; peace - not only as a lack of war, but as social and sustainable development; internationalism; federalism and de-centralisation (PCE 2004c).

The Catalan CiU (Convergència i Unió), the regional Party of the IU in the populous and economically prosperous region of Catalonia, is a central support structure of the IU as a whole.¹⁴ It can be included as part of the two above-mentioned critical currents as a regional party. Since the transition, the CiU has taken turns in power with the PSC-PSOE, a regional party close to the PSOE. It was therefore experienced a completely different process than that of the IU as a whole. The CiU has close relationships to the financial sector and to a larger extent represents the political centre (Heywood 1995, p. 210). Thus, after the fall of the Berlin wall, it underwent a similar process as the Italian Communist Party and in April 1990, formally founded itself anew as a socialist party. Critics point to the strong influence of the CiU, standing close to the economic sector. They see it as responsible for the overall development of the Izquierda Unida. Their critique of the leadership of the national IU is therefore to be judged from a fundamentally different perspective.

The financial problems of the IU should also be mentioned. Because of the more than 120,000 lost votes, the state support for the IU will decrease by 390,000 Euros (Rebelión, 28 April 2004). A similar situation is expected from the European elections.

A highly differentiated picture of the IU at the first half of 2004 emerges. Through the composition of the present IU leadership, a course is taking shape which rejects radical opposition to the ruling PSOE. Rather, the group surrounding the party leadership and Llamazares seems to consider the “third political sphere” that it wants to create as compatible with the ruling socialists. Since it assumes the election results of March 13 to be an “election for the left”, in which many voters had only voted for immediate pragmatic reasons for the PSOE and against the IU, the European elections in June 2004 were an important litmus test for the validity of their strategy. Opposing them are the ever louder voices within the IU, which perceive the political survival of their party as endangered through the further rapprochement to the PSOE. Questions concerning the organisational opening and substantial political proximity to the social movements and a further democratisation of the party structure are yet undecided.

VI. Appendix

1. Election results of the PCE and the IU, 1977-2004

		%	Votes
PCE	1977 General	9.3	1,718,026
PCE	1979 General	10.7	1,940,236
PCE	1979 Local	12.7	2,139,603
PCE	1982 General	4.1	965,670
PCE	1983 Local	8.0	1,500,017
IU	1986 General	4.6	935,504
IU	1987 Local	6.1	1,212,262
IU	1987 European	5.3	1,011,830
IU	1989 European	6.0	981,742
IU	1989 General	9.1	1,851,080
IU	1991 Local	8.3	1,579,097
IU	1993 General	9.2	2,202,282
IU	1994 European	13.4	2,486,550
IU	1995 Local	11.6	2,590,301
IU	1996 General	10.5	2,639,774
IU	1999 European	5.7	1,213,254
IU	1999 Local	6.5	1,383,151
IU	2000 General	5.4	1,263,043
IU	2004 General	5.1	1,324,370
IU	2004 European	4.16	636,458

Source: Ministry of the Interior

2.1 Number of members of the PCE, 1977-1999

Year	Members
1977	191,607 (201,757 Heywood, 240,000 Botella)
1978	156,184
1981	132,069
1983	82,877
1985	67,808

1987	62,342
1991	55,000
1992	44,775
1996	34,704
1997	35,000
1999	26,553

2.2 Number of members IU, 1992-2000

Year	Members
1992	57,303 (78.1%)
1994	52,711
1995	57,000
1996	65,999 (53.3%)
1997	71,578 (43.8%)
1999	69,000 (38.4%)
2000	65,000

Source: IU, quoted after Ramiro 2002, p. 14.

Note: The number in brackets refer to the share of the PCE members in the overall number of IU members.

3. Composition of the PCE Members

Gender

Men 87%

Women 13%

Date of Entry

Before 1939 9

60-60 14

70-70 32

78-78 45

Employment

Industrial workers	39
Non-manual workers	15
Academics	32
Small tradesmen, self-employed	3
Rural workers	3
Students	4
Others	4

Source: PCE, quoted following Botella 1988, p. 71.

4. The PCE – Income, 1988-1999

Year	Income variation	IU Income	Member contributions	Other contributions
1988		43.1	7.9	38.8
1989	- 17.3	52.0	4.1	37.4
1990	+103.3	61.4	4.1	11.3
1991	- 26.2	81.7	2.5	4.9
1992	+ 31.9	68.5	5.0	7.3
1993	+ 1.7	50.8	4.6	15.8
1994	+ 76.9	24.0	3.5	11.5
1995	- 48.7	41.8	12.5	15.6
1996	+ 16.7	35.8	10.7	11.6
1999	- 58.8	83.0	10.9	5.2

Source: The data are taken from PCE reports. The income numbers show the yearly variations. All other numbers are percentage share of the overall income. Quoted after Ramiro 2002.

5. The parliamentary elections 2004¹⁵

5.1 National parliamentary elections 2004

Party	Votes	%	Seats
Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)	11,026,163	42.6	164
Partido Popular (PP)	9,763,144	37.7	148

Convergència i Unió (CiU)	835,471	3.2	10
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)	652,196	2.5	8
Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea – Partido Nacionalista Vasco (EAJ-PNV)	420,980	1.6	7
Izquierda Unida (IU)	1,324,370	5.1	5
Coalición Canaria (CC)	235,221	0.9	3
Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG)	208,688	0.8	2
Chunta Aragonesista (ChA)	94,252	0.4	1
Eusko Alkartasuna (EA)	80,905	0.3	1
Nafarroa Bai (Na-Bai)	61,045	0.2	1
Partido Andalucista (PA)	181,868	0.7	0
Others	599,201	2.3	0

5.2 European election results

PSOE	6,621,570	43,30	25
PP	6,315,294	41,30	23
GALEUSCA	790,051	5,17	3
IU-ICV-EUiA	636,458	4,16	2
EdP	380,095	2,49	1

EdP – Europa de los Pueblos – Europe of the People

Galeusca – Pueblos de Europa – Peoples of Europe

Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds – Initiative für Katalonien/Die Grünen, Esquerra Unida i Alternativa – United and Alternative Left

Source: <http://www.elecciones.mit.es/elecjun2004/peuropeo>.

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Notes

- ¹ After the European elections there was a pronounced degree of self-criticism and proposal for a future strategy. This will be briefly discussed in Sections IV and V.
- ² Media expert Jean-Pierre Castellani, in his research of the Spanish press, comes to the conclusion that communications media are becoming increasingly dependent on a few media giants, something that could signal the „end of an independent press“ (Castellani 2004:676)
- ³ Gazpar Llamazares Trigo, born in 1957, was a physician who began his party career after the transition in the PCE in 1981. Since 1988 general secretary of the Communist Party of Asturias, in 1991 he then became delegate and speaker of the IU parliamentary group in Asturias. He has been its chairman since the VI. Party Congress in October 2000.
- ⁴ for a more detailed exposition of the historical developmental lines, please refer to Schultz, 2005.
- ⁵ The recent developments in the Party of the European Left (Euroleft, EL) cannot yet be elaborated on extensively. In Section VI, I will, however, briefly address the position of the Spanish left with respect to the EL.
- ⁶ Refer to Schultz (2005) for more details about this central political event and the development of the IU.
- ⁷ It concentrated its electoral campaign mainly on the figure of Gazpar Llamazares, whose webpage at times replaced that of the party and was furnished with numerous interviews and videos about him.
- ⁸ According to EU-deputy Willy Mayer, 80% of Spanish agriculture is endangered if the presently planned EU agrarian policy is implemented (El País, 24 May 2004)
- ⁹ Neither point has been made more concrete or has been discussed publicly.
- ¹⁰ For a tabulation of the budget of the IU , please refer to Table 4.
- ¹¹ For a distribution in terms of percentages of party financing, refer to the numbers in Table 4.
- ¹² A number of very concrete political measures and legislative proposals follow. These cannot be discussed here in detail. They are available online and the References Section of this paper indicate the corresponding document.
- ¹³ El País was founded in 1976 and has a circulation of more than 433,000 . It is by far the largest national newspaper. “Indeed, El País is the most important general information daily in Spain today, a paper of almost undisputed authority (Castellani 2004, pp. 660-67).
- ¹⁴ Refer to appendix for the proportion of CiU votes.
- ¹⁵ More detail under <http://electionresources.org/es/maps.php?election=2004> . This address is also the source of the election results cited here.