Beat: Politics

The elimination of the crime of sedition in Spain breaks the Socialist Party

Reduces penalties for the independence

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USPA NEWS - "We are in the midst of escalating prices and the only thing that is getting cheaper is the attack on the Constitution." The phrase, pronounced on Friday by the socialist president of the regional government of Castilla-La Mancha, a region located south of Madrid, in the center of the Iberian Peninsula, reflects the existing division in the Socialist Party due to the reform of the Penal Code that the Spanish Government approved this week and that eliminates the crime of sedition, now replaced by another of "aggravated public disorder" that carries fewer penalties. The change is important because it benefits the Catalan independence leaders condemned by the failed Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

The opposition suspects that with the approved change the Government is paying the Catalan independentists for their support. Also to the Basque nationalist parties, which maintain among their aspirations the independence of that region of Northern Spain. But the change has unnerved some prominent regional socialist leaders. The presidents of Castilla-La Mancha, Aragón and Extremadura, who had previously rejected pardons for the Catalan independence leaders, oppose the reduction in sentences approved by the Government of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. And they do so six months before the regional and local elections next May, in which the Socialist Party could lose six of the nine regions in which it now governs.

The three regional leaders admit that defending the unity of Spain brings them greater electoral benefits, because the elimination of the crime of sedition and its replacement by "aggravated public disorder" is rejected by the majority of Spaniards, according to polls. The reason seems clear: the crime of sedition is punishable by up to 15 years in prison and disqualification from holding public office for 12 years. The new crime reduces prison sentences to five years and disqualification to eight years. “I do not share the approach, this does not mean at all that we do not seek greater coexistence in Catalonia among all. But what happened is very serious. Today we are in full escalation of prices and the only thing that is going to get cheaper is the attack on the Constitution,” said the president of Castilla-La Mancha, Emiliano García-Page.

"I am against the reform of the crime of sedition," said, in turn, the president of Aragón, Javier Lambán. And the president of Extremadura, Guillermo Fernández Vara, was more explicit: “I don't like anything that the independence movement likes. That said, five years ago, with the current Penal Code, the Popular Party Government had two independence referendums and a Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Spain was broken. Today, with another Government, what has been broken is the independence movement,” he said.

The judges also spoke out against the elimination of the crime of sedition in the Spanish Penal Code. The Supreme Court, which judged the independence leaders, warned in the sentence for the Unilateral Declaration of Independence that "sedition is not the same as public disorder." And the main opposition party to the Government, the conservative Popular Party, announced that it will revoke the legal change if it reaches the Government of Spain in the legislative elections at the end of 2023.

All this does not seem to worry the Government of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who for weeks was denying that there were negotiations with the Catalan independentists to eliminate the crime of sedition. For the opposition, it was one more of the many lies told by the Prime Minister, determined to remain in office until the end of the legislature, even if it is with the support of the Catalan separatists, the heirs of the Basque terrorist organization ETA and the extreme left. On Friday, the Socialist Party and the far-left coalition Podemos presented the bill in Parliament for parliamentary processing.

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