

Spain: protestors discuss Madrid bombings, Aznar's lies, the election aftermath

Vicky Short, Celia Sokolowski
22 March 2004

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to many demonstrators in Madrid about the upsurge that brought about the electoral defeat of the Popular Party (PP) and their views concerning the incoming Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) government.

Juan, a retired brewery worker, told the WSWs, "With a PSOE government, I hope there will be more dialogue with the other parties in opposition, the autonomous regions, etc. I hope they will do more for old people. However, the economic programme of the PSOE will be similar to that of the PP. On the war, people think that the troops are going to come back tomorrow. They are wrong, it will take time."

Jesús, José and David are aged 23, 19 and 20. "The PSOE won because of the tactical vote of the left," David said. "Without the bombings, the PP would have lost the overall majority, but there was not enough support then for the PSOE to win outright. The bombing outrage mobilised the left to vote, including those who had abstained in the past, particularly the youth. It was a vote to oust the PP, rather than to put the PSOE in. Bush's attack on the election, saying that the terrorists won, was an attack on the democratic rights of the Spanish people. Do they think we are stupid, or what?"

Jesús said they were hoping the PSOE government would reform all of the PP's ideas—on economic issues, education and democratic rights. "Zapatero has to reckon with the nine million PP voters and the leaders of the PP, who are something else. They will not shut up. He has to proceed with caution."

David added that if Zapatero did not comply with his promises, "They are not going to remove me from the streets. We will be back here again and again."

José said, "The US has no right to invade any country because it doesn't like their government. The US has been doing this for years in Latin America. The American people are the most misled in the world. They are not responsible for the actions of their government."

Sara is 19 and is a first-time voter. She said: "I voted Izquierda Unida [United Left], but my vote was meant to get rid of the PP. However, I could not vote PSOE as a tactical vote, because I think people should stick to what they believe in and vote on the basis of principles, not tactics. I don't believe any of them are any good, but the PP was out of this world, totally anti-democratic, so anything else has to be better."

"Nobody has illusions in the PSOE. They are not going to solve our problems. They are the lesser of two evils. I hope they will not fail us, though. Many people have voted PSOE not because they like them, but to get rid of the PP. So they know that if they do it badly, we will be in the streets again, especially those young people who have voted for the first time."

"What happened on Saturday was really great. People started realising through the international press that although the government insisted [the Basque separatist] ETA was responsible for the bombings, there was a belief that it could be Al Qaeda. People started turning up outside the PP headquarters at about 6 o'clock, then people marched to the Puerta del Sol at midnight, then to Atocha Station, more and more people turning up all the time, stopping the traffic. There were no police to stop it. It was completely spontaneous. There were messages on mobile telephones and on the Internet, messages saying this is a lying government and it is withholding information, etc. These actions were not reported in the press here."

"I think Zapatero will have to bring back the troops, for his own good, otherwise he will pay. I prefer the United Nations to be there, although I'd rather there be no troops. But at the same time, there is such chaos in Iraq...."

"If the PSOE doesn't carry out its promises, we will be in the streets to ask for its resignation and for another government."

In response to the accusations that the victory of the PSOE was a victory for terrorism, Jerónimo, 19, said, "This is not a capitulation to terrorism. People were already fed up with this government before. It is a lying government, although it

is a shame that something like this outrage had to happen for people to decide to vote the PP out.

“I think that Bush and Blair have received a shock and are very unhappy that they have lost their best friend and ally, but this was a popular action that did not show cowardice, but on the contrary was very brave. We never wanted this war, we demonstrated a year ago against the war, and this has confirmed the warnings we gave that this type of outrage could happen. The problem is that the government never listened to the people.”

José Ramón is 53 and a supporter of Izquierda Unida. He said, “Many things contributed to the election of the PSOE. There was an accumulated disgust with the anti-democratic actions of the PP government, its imposed decrees on education and employment that provoked a general strike, and its support for the war. All this culminated in the entire process of misinformation during the 36 hours following the outrage.”

His wife, Matilde, added, “There was also a tactical vote of people who would have voted IU, and others who voted PSOE in order to sack the PP government, because we could see that otherwise fascism would be installed once more in Spain.

“We hope that there will be a change in the way things are done, but Zapatero has to show people, particularly people of the left who have voted the PSOE in despite its past record. They have to demonstrate that they are going to do things differently on the question of the war, and especially on the economy. People have to be continuously in the streets demanding that they carry out the wishes of the people.”

Her husband added, “This is only the first step—to get rid of Aznar. Now we have to be vigilant. We should give this government a chance, at least the first 100 days that traditionally are given to any new government.

“One real fear I have is that the PSOE government will collaborate with the so-called anti-terrorist measures, which mean an attack on democratic rights. In this I am really afraid the PSOE government will capitulate.

“Izquierda Unida has given the PSOE a lot of red blood transfusions, red votes, and of this we are proud. This result would have not happened without the IU. The PSOE would not have done things they’ve done without IU pulling its weight behind them.

“I think that Bush and Blair are more frightened by the way the PP lost than the fact that it was removed. If the PSOE had won in a normal election, they would not have minded so much. But the PP was toppled in the midst of a semi-popular revolt, and that is what frightens them.”

Bruno, aged 18, said, “The main concern of capital is money—and in Iraq, oil, and in Afghanistan, transporting oil. But we have to help the Iraqis bring about their own democracy by helping them find ways for democracy to be developed by the people themselves. The troops should be there, but not to decide or impose anything, but rather to help.”

His friend, Sergio, said that the UN had not helped the people of Afghanistan. “Afghanistan is divided into tribes, feudal lords, and Bush doesn’t care. They have made sure that they control the few points that interest them to transport the oil. The rest is of no concern to them.”

Angeles said, “There was already a mood against the PP and the war, as was demonstrated by the previous mass demonstrations. There is an important discrediting of left governments such as Blair’s, but also here. The previous PSOE government participated in the wars against Iraq, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan.... There was social unrest that was not expressed politically. There was enormous abstention. The bombs and the government’s lies have mobilised people. ETA twice denied responsibility for the Madrid bombs, and there was a moment when people realised the government was lying.

“There was a sudden change in just a few hours. I think an important political era is opening up in Spain. As you see, people are on the streets, mobilised, and people are no longer going to tolerate lies and tricks. People have learned a tremendous amount over the last year, and particularly in the last few days. People are more conscious of their own strength. There was no alternative to the PSOE. People saw it as the only way to remove the PP. A new and interesting political era has started.

“The bombing outrage was carried out by Islamic terrorism, but it is not clear who was pulling the strings. There is not only the link between bin Laden and the CIA, but the killing of students and workers going to work points to a ‘black hand’ behind the atrocity. It has all the hallmarks of a fascist outrage. It reminded me of the fascist attacks on trains in Bologna, Italy.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact