

Spanish Socialist Party coup exposes Podemos

Paul Mitchell, Alex Lantier
4 October 2016

The successful putsch of former Prime Minister Felipe González inside the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)—aiming to install a right-wing government in Spain, after two inconclusive elections and nine months of a hung parliament—has exposed the reactionary character of the pseudo-left Podemos party.

The putsch aimed to topple PSOE General Secretary Pedro Sánchez, allowing the PSOE to abstain in a parliamentary vote and bring a minority Popular Party (PP) government to power. González's associates trampled party procedures and public opinion, and whipped up a media campaign against Sánchez, making crystal clear what tens of millions of Spanish workers know about this party. The PSOE is a free-market, pro-war party run by the banks, the intelligence agencies, and the military.

The PSOE is, moreover, the party around which Podemos built its hopes of coming to power and setting up a so-called “Government of Change.” Like its Greek ally Syriza, which came to power last year promising to end austerity and then implemented savage austerity measures against the workers, Podemos bases its agenda for “change” on the diktat of the banks and war planners.

After the inner-party coup in the PSOE began, as 17 members of the PSOE Federal Executive resigned after González publicly denounced Sánchez, Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias did everything to stoke illusions about the PSOE. He said, “To attempt to drop a General Secretary elected by the membership through resignations is a fraud.” He added that it signified “the most important crisis since the end of the civil war, in the most important Spanish party of the past century.”

Iglesias did not say why he believes that the PSOE—a long-standing party of austerity, free-market policies, and NATO wars—is more important than his own party. He went on, however, to heap praise on Sánchez for resisting González inside the PSOE, and again stressed

that the PSOE could work with Podemos to form a progressive government.

“It’s undeniable that Pedro Sánchez has shown courage in confronting the forces of the regime within his party,” he said, “but it might have made more sense to also show that courage against the powers-that-be outside his party. If he had, today we could be ruling together and perhaps our government, in spite of all difficulties, might have been able to implement redistribution policies and regeneration [of democracy] policies, put forward democratic solutions to plurinational tension in Spain and become an example for other European countries.”

Sánchez was not confronting the “forces of the regime,” any more than the PSOE was preparing to carry out a left-wing, democratic, or egalitarian agenda. As anger spread among PSOE voters, and protests erupted outside PSOE headquarters in several cities, Iglesias was seeking to keep the situation under control and promote illusions that Sánchez would oppose the PP.

The unfolding crisis inside the PSOE rapidly gave the lie to these illusions. On Saturday, Sánchez stepped down and pledged loyalty to the pro-González faction led by the PSOE’s regional president in Andalucía, Susana Díaz, declaring, “the caretaker commission set up in the following hours will count upon my loyal support.”

This paves a way for the installation of a PP government, even though the PP only received 33 percent of the vote in the June elections.

The PSOE’s push to install a PP regime, dedicated to austerity and ensuring Spain’s place in NATO war planning, marks a historic turning point in European politics since the collapse of Spain’s Franco dictatorship in 1977–1978. It has shed a stark light on the PSOE-PP duopoly that dominated Spanish political life. The actions of González—the PSOE’s main leader,

and the artisan of its explicit rejection of Marxism at its 1979 congress—show how, in the final analysis, these two parties worked together to attack the working class.

Since the 2008 crisis erupted, however, the PSOE's austerity agenda has steadily undermined the PSOE's support. Under Prime Minister José Zapatero, the PSOE vote rapidly collapsed, mirroring the collapse of reactionary social democratic parties across Europe such as the Socialist Party in France and, above all, the Pasok party in Greece.

Like Syriza in Greece, the role of Podemos was not to offer a revolutionary alternative to the old capitalist duopoly of the PSOE-PP. Podemos is an alliance of Stalinist forces, led by a cabal of academics around Iglesias, with the Anticapitalist Left (IA), the Spanish affiliate of France's New Anti-capitalist Party. It is, in fact, deeply tied to the reactionary political forces that set up the PSOE-PP duopoly, to which Podemos strives to give a "left" face.

Iglesias was on a first-name basis with former Spanish Communist Party (PCE) leader Santiago Carrillo prior to Carrillo's death in 2012, aged 97. He wrote a sympathetic obituary of the Stalinist leader in *Público*, concluding: "Despite everything, Santiago was one of ours. Now and forever."

This was an unmistakable statement of support for the post-Franco set-up, which Carrillo played a key role in establishing. Carrillo infamously aided and abetted the Stalinist abduction and murder of Trotskyists and of Andrés Nin, the leader of the centrist Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), during the Spanish Civil War. He also spoke to the Francoite authorities in the 1970s, to assure them that the PCE would defend them during a "peaceful transition" after Franco's death in 1975 and block a revolutionary struggle by the working class.

Indeed, Iglesias' remark that the PSOE is the "most important Spanish party of the past century" faithfully continues and reflects the PCE's post-Franco alliance with the PSOE.

Podemos is now signalling that it intends to continue working with the PSOE, as before, after the González putsch. Underlying this essentially friendly attitude to the putsch is the fact that Podemos' political perspective is not fundamentally different from that of the most reactionary sections of the PSOE. Leading figures inside Podemos also support, like González,

alliances with openly right-wing parties—in this case, the Citizens party of Albert Rivera.

Podemos' number two, Iñigo Errejón, reacted to the González putsch inside the PSOE by lamenting that Podemos had not adopted the strategy, backed by Sánchez inside the PSOE and Errejón inside Podemos, of forming a PSOE-Podemos-Citizens government. Iglesias briefly attempted this strategy in the spring before dropping it, fearing that it would expose Podemos to too much criticism from the left.

"It is certain that we were not as flexible as we should have been," Errejón told *Público* on Friday, referring to Podemos' government talks with the PSOE. He went on to pledge, according to *Público*, that Podemos "will continue extending an open hand to the Socialist Party once the battle between partisans and critics of Pedro Sánchez is resolved."

Pablo Echenique, Podemos' number three official, made clear that Podemos' collaboration with the PSOE would continue, including with those sections who supported González's putsch. As leader of Podemos in the Aragón region, he said that the region's pro-González PSOE president, Javier Lambán, would simply have to "provide explanations" to Podemos officials in the region if and when the PSOE abstained in parliament and thus let the PP take power.



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