

Sánchez re-elected as leader of Spain's Socialist Party

Alejandro López
6 June 2017

Eight months after his ouster as general secretary of the Socialist Party (PSOE), Pedro Sánchez was re-elected general secretary with 50.2 percent of the votes. He defeated the favourite of the political establishment, the regional premier of Andalusia Susana Díaz, who won 40 percent.

The PSOE had been in the hands of a caretaker committee since Sánchez's ouster in October, in an internal coup orchestrated by a cabal of bankers, the intelligence services and the media. Led by former PSOE Prime Minister Felipe González and *El País* editor-in-chief Juan Luis Cebrián, they ousted Sánchez due to his refusal to allow Mariano Rajoy's conservative Popular Party (PP) to form a minority government. At that point, Spain had been without a government for 10 months.

Sánchez's opposition reflected factional interests within the PSOE bureaucracy, backed by "left" publications like *Público* and *Eldiario.org*, that feared that the PSOE's support to a PP government would completely discredit one of the main pillars of Spanish capitalism in the post-Franco period.

Sections of the party apparatus and membership were won over to Sánchez's proposal for a vague "turn to the left" and developing closer relations with the Podemos party. This is a desperate attempt to respond to and control rising social discontent.

The radicalization of wide layers of the population was reflected in a recent poll of young people by the European Broadcasters Union. When asked, "Would you actively participate in a large-scale uprising against the generation in power if it happened in the next days or months?" more than half, 53 percent, said "yes." In Greece, France and Spain the figure was over 60 percent.

With Sánchez's election, the PSOE is signalling to

Podemos and the organisations orbiting around it that they are prepared to go into government if the PP minority government collapses. Such a government would seek to suppress growing anti-capitalist sentiment and continue to carry out the dictates of the financial oligarchy.

Sánchez has made it clear that he does not aim to bring down the PP government. He opposes the no confidence vote against the PP proposed by Podemos in parliament. Last week, moreover, the PSOE collaborated with the PP in parliament to bury an investigative commission dedicated to investigating the "political police," a unit created by the former Interior Minister Jorge Fernández Díaz to counter conspiring Catalan nationalist politicians.

Sánchez has also responded to one of the major concerns of the Spanish bourgeoisie: the calling of a referendum on independence in the wealthy region of Catalonia.

Only three days after taking control of the PSOE, he phoned Rajoy to tell him that the PSOE will join his government in defence of "legality and the Constitution in Catalonia," and that he opposes the planned Catalan independence referendum. This was a direct response to the Catalan premiers call of a meeting with all the political parties in favour of the independence referendum.

The nomination of Sánchez has been well received by the pseudo-left, which aims to work a deal with the PSOE. On Twitter, Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias stated: "The members have spoken very clearly. Congratulations to Pedro Sánchez." The following day Iglesias and Sánchez spoke by telephone; both agreed on the "unsustainable situation of the PP in the government, surrounded by corruption."

Iglesias announced that he was willing to drop

Podemos' no confidence if the PSOE announced their own no confidence vote. Under Spain's constitutional system, a no confidence vote is a de facto debate, whereby the party proposing the vote asks parliament to form a government majority. That is, by dropping its no confidence in favour of that of the PSOE, Podemos is signalling its support for a PSOE-led government.

Iglesias has tried to form a government with the PSOE for the past year and a half since the December 2015 general elections. Such a government, as the WSWs has insisted, and as experiences in Portugal and above all the imposition of austerity in Greece by Syriza have shown, would be no alternative. It would rapidly move against the working class.

At the local level, Podemos-controlled city councils have already proven to be defenders of bourgeois order, implementing austerity, paying billions of euros to the banks, and mobilizing police to crush strikes and persecute migrants.

Sánchez's victory was hailed by the various groups orbiting in or around Podemos, such as Revolutionary Left (Izquierda Revolucionaria), Class Struggle (Lucha de Clases) and Class against Class (Clase contra Clase).

Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left, IR), the Spanish section of the Committee for a Workers' International, declared that Sánchez "went from being a 'puppet' in the hands of the apparatus to resisting the onslaught of Felipe González. ... Now Pedro Sánchez enjoys an authority between the PSOE base and the voters of the PSOE much greater than any other leader of the party." They concluded by urging an alliance with Podemos to form a government.

Similarly, Lucha de Clases calls for a PSOE-Podemos alliance. It claimed that "the ruling class has lost, in principle and pending the development of the PSOE congress in June, direct control of the leadership of this party, which is more exposed to the influence of working class pressure and Unidos Podemos."

The Morenoite Revolutionary Workers Tendency states that Sánchez "belongs to a new batch of intelligent politicians of the bourgeoisie ... [who] have no intention of confronting the capitalist model, only to make it less brutal. He wants to reform, not revolutionize. He also 'aspires' for capitalism to be a bit less austere towards the lives of workers."

Jaime Pastor, the long-time leader of the Spanish Pabloites and leader of Podemos' highest body in

Madrid, the Citizens Council, announced in the *Viento Sur* that "Time will tell" if Sánchez's victory "is limited to a change in the ruling elite of this party or if, on the contrary, it announces the entry into a phase in which social-liberalism becomes a thing of the past."

These forces are desperate to prevent workers from drawing political conclusions from the experiences the Spanish and international working class have had with the social democratic parties and their pseudo-left successors like Podemos and Syriza. They have imposed the dictates of the capitalists anywhere they have ruled. Nonetheless, these forces insist that—instead of building a revolutionary Trotskyist party in the working class—it is possible to go forward through an alliance with the PSOE.

Pastor's reference to a "thing of the past" is a euphemism for the PSOE's militarist and free-market policies over the past four decades. This is the party that led Spain into the European Union, NATO and the euro currency, and implemented the first attacks against the working class through labour and pension reforms, deindustrialization policies, privatisation and crackdowns on democratic rights.

This party sent the Spanish army on its first missions in the US-led wars in the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East, the first foreign interventions since World War II, and sent them against striking air traffic controllers in December 2010.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)