

# Podemos agrees to back Spanish social-democratic government

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Yesterday, the Podemos party signed a “pre-accord” with the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), pledging to support whatever government the PSOE ultimately forms after Sunday’s elections.

The accord is another significant step in the coming-out of Europe’s petty-bourgeois “post-Marxist” parties as reactionary, anti-working class groups. The Greek ally of Podemos, Syriza, took office in 2015 and promptly trampled its election promises to end austerity, imposing tens of billions of euros in social cuts. Similarly, Podemos and the PSOE are trying to present their accord to the public as a plan for a “progressive” and “democratic” government. In fact, Podemos is endorsing the PSOE’s policies of social austerity and violent police repression in Catalonia.

In their accord, signed by Podemos General Secretary Pablo Iglesias and acting Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez of the PSOE, the two parties pledge: “The government of Spain will make a priority of guaranteeing social peace in Catalonia and the normalization of political life. With this purpose, it will organize dialog in Catalonia, searching formulations that will generate common understanding and reconciliation, always within the context of the Constitution.”

The accord also commits Podemos to austerity, which the PSOE pledged to impose in a letter to the European Union (EU) before the election, promising billions of euros in new social cuts. The accord stresses the principles of “fiscal justice and balanced budgets.”

Under the terms of the accord, Iglesias is to be vice-president of the council of ministers under a PSOE prime minister in whatever government the PSOE now assembles.

After signing the accord, Iglesias stressed that Podemos would mount no opposition whatsoever to the PSOE. “Sanchez knows he will be able to count on our total loyalty,” Iglesias declared. “It is time to leave behind all

criticisms ... and to work side by side on the historic and exciting task we have ahead of us.” He claimed that a government led by the PSOE and Podemos would be “the best vaccine against the far right.”

Iglesias’ claim that a PSOE-Podemos government will halt the rise of the fascistic, pro-Francoite Vox party is a political fraud. With this alliance, Podemos is not only backing EU austerity targeting the working class, but endorsing the police-state repression of protests in Catalonia that is at the heart of Vox’s propaganda. This allows Vox to continue to grow by posturing as the defender of the Spanish people against PSOE-Podemos austerity, while also legitimizing Vox’s calls for police-state policies.

Podemos and the PSOE are not fighting the drive to authoritarianism, but organizing it. The PSOE’s Catalan policy endorsed by Podemos has a fascistic character. The PSOE first backed the Popular Party (PP) government’s bloody crackdown on the peaceful October 2017 Catalan independence referendum, as the PP supported anti-Catalan protests where marchers sang the fascist Francoite hymn *Cara al Sol*. After it took power last year, the PSOE invited Vox to help the judiciary prosecute Catalan political prisoners.

The PSOE then unleashed its own brutal police crackdown last month in Catalonia on mass protests against the decade-long prison sentences handed down at their trials. Clashes injured 700 protesters, including four who lost eyes to rubber bullets shot by police. Hundreds were arrested.

Podemos is under no illusion as to the character of the PSOE or of its Catalan policy. It saw at first hand the violent repression meted out by Spanish and Catalan regional police under PSOE orders to protesters in Barcelona—which Iglesias visited during the clashes, declaring his satisfaction that “institutional relations between the police forces are working.” Podemos is

aware that the PSOE is pursuing a policy of violent repression in Catalonia that strengthens the fascistic Vox party, and supports the PSOE on this basis.

Attempts by certain members of Podemos to still keep posturing as “left” critics of the PSOE are absurd and false. Miguel Urban of the Pabloite *Anticapitalistas* faction of Podemos applauded the deal with the PSOE, but added: “Relief should not make us lower our guard. The risks we will face every day are: co-opting those who came to change everything, the whitewashing of those who always sought to prevent it, and giving (the PSOE) a monopoly on challenging the right.”

The PSOE has been the Spanish bourgeoisie’s main party of government since the 1978 Transition from the fascist Francoite regime to parliamentary rule, imposing EU austerity and waging war from Afghanistan to Libya. Urban’s argument as to whether the ruling class could co-opt Podemos while it serves in a capitalist government with the PSOE is ridiculous. If the PSOE is choosing Podemos as a coalition partner, it is because Podemos has shown that it is a trusted, pro-austerity and pro-war tool of Spanish imperialism.

The PSOE and Podemos are promoting their accord on an entirely fraudulent basis. Not only would a government formed on this basis be neither progressive nor democratic, but the accord does not actually allow the two parties to form a government. The PSOE has 120 seats and Podemos 35; their combined 155 is 21 short of the 176 needed for a majority of Spain’s 350-seat Congress. The PSOE is now seeking more allies to add to its government “pre-accord” with Podemos, including Catalan or Basque nationalist parties and the right-wing Citizens party.

In reality, this accord is a maneuver by Podemos to tie workers and youth to the PSOE, and suppress political opposition to the bourgeoisie’s drive to police-state rule. Podemos aims to demoralize workers, allow Vox to posture as the only party opposing the PSOE, and thus ensure that nothing in official politics accidentally encourages workers to mount a struggle against the PSOE.

This also accounts for the extraordinary speed with which the PSOE and Podemos reached their accord. Spain had to return to the polls on Sunday because talks between the PSOE and Podemos on forming a government after the April 2019 elections dragged on for six months and ultimately collapsed. Now, however, they took just over a day to reach an accord to form a government—an accord that was clearly prepared well in

advance.

“Six months and one wasted election, and now they fix up everything in under 48 hours,” students complained to the pro-PSOE daily *El Pais* at Madrid’s Complutense University—where many Podemos leaders, including Iglesias, taught as political science professors.

*El Pais* editorialized: “If it was possible to sign the accord in just a few hours, why then did they use six wasted months and call new elections? The two leaders (Sanchez and Iglesias) are obliged to give more coherent explanations than what they have offered so far.”

In fact, Sanchez and Iglesias have not offered any explanations, since an accounting of why the Podemos-PSOE talks failed in September exposes the utterly cynical calculations of Podemos.

Professor Jaime Pastor of *Anticapitalistas* wrote one article explaining why Podemos had to pull out of talks with the PSOE. He stressed the dangers posed to Podemos if it entered a PSOE government before the October 2019 sentencing of the Catalan political prisoners to long jail terms. He wrote, “It was difficult to think that Podemos could have developed left-wing policies from within the government and, on the other hand, by its silence it would have had to admit it was complicit in right-wing policies on economic and social questions and repressive policies in Catalonia.”

Now, however, the PSOE has already jailed the Catalan political prisoners in collaboration with Vox, and cracked down on protests against it, and Podemos apparently believes the coast is clear. It is entering into government with the PSOE, hoping not to be seen as complicit in the worst of the PSOE’s right-wing social and economic policies and its police-state repression in Catalonia.

The cynical, second-rate maneuvers of the Stalinist and Pabloite elements making up Podemos will, in the end, convince no one. The accord reached between Sanchez and Iglesias is definitive confirmation that the affluent professors, journalists, and army officers who make up Podemos are determined political enemies of the working class.



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