

Podemos joins Spanish Socialist Party in regional coalition

By Paul Mitchell and Alejandro López
24 August 2017

For the first time, the pseudo-left party Podemos has joined a regional coalition government with the Socialist Party (PSOE). The agreement in Castilla-La Mancha is a template for other regional agreements and a possible precursor to a national “government of progress” involving the two parties.

The decision to join a coalition in Castilla-La Mancha comes less than a year after Podemos was forced to withdraw its support from the minority regional PSOE administration led by Emiliano García-Page, after it abandoned promised social measures, in the process throwing Podemos’ orientation to the PSOE nationally into crisis.

García-Page was a key figure in the coup to topple Pedro Sánchez as PSOE party leader in order to allow the Popular Party (PP) to form a minority government in Madrid. Sánchez represented sections of the PSOE who considered that a vague “turn to the left” and closer relations with Podemos would control rising social discontent and halt the PSOE’s electoral collapse. García-Page bitterly opposed this, accusing Sánchez of wanting to “Podemosise” the PSOE.

With Sánchez’s re-election as PSOE general secretary earlier this year the hopes of Podemos leaders rose again for new discussions on a left alliance. On July 17, Sánchez and Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias met to set up a liaison committee to discuss areas in which they can cooperate.

García-Page’s offer to Podemos in Castilla-La Mancha must be seen in this context. He needs Podemos to pass the budget, blocked by the PP in the regional Congress.

The PP has 16 deputies to the PSOE’s 15 and Podemos holds the balance of power with its two deputies—regional secretary José García Molina, a close ally of Iglesias, and David Llorente, a prominent member of the Pabloite group Anticapitalistas.

On July 25, Iglesias co-authored an article for the online newspaper *20 Minutos* with his former deputy, Iñigo Errejón—the first for many months. The two had fallen out over how best to suppress opposition in the working class,

whether through token protests in alliance with the trade unions (Iglesias) or by preventing social mobilisations in favour of purely electoral and parliamentary manoeuvres oriented to the PSOE (Errejón).

Referring to the re-election of Sánchez as PSOE leader Iglesias and Errejón declared, “If it is possible to begin to build a greater collaboration with the PSOE at the state level today, it is precisely because of the victory in this party of those who are favourable to approach the pole of change because they assume that they cannot rule alone and that it is not convenient for them to do so with the PP and Citizens.”

They concluded, “In Podemos we mark the regional governments as our main strategic objective in this political cycle ... We know we cannot do this alone; we need our sister political forces that accompany us and civil society, and we also need the Socialist Party to continue to take steps that are closer to being an ally of the bloc of change than of the bloc of restoration.”

Iglesias and Errejón’s line prevailed. No one on the regional Podemos Citizens Council, including its eight Pabloite members, voted against going into government. It was passed by 26-0 with nine abstentions. Podemos’ 15,000 supporters in Castilla-La Mancha were asked, “Do you think Podemos Castilla-La Mancha should vote in favour of the budget if on the basis of a government agreement there is a guarantee that its own policies of a guaranteed income will be launched and be under its control?” They voted 78 percent in favour.

Molina declared that “a new stage opens in Castilla-La Mancha.” In answer to accusations that the budget is the same one Podemos rejected earlier this year, he replied, “We do not have to stay entangled in what happened, but in what has to happen.”

As part of the deal, the PSOE conjured up two new posts that reek of the byzantine “caste” relationships Iglesias rails against. Molina has been slotted into a second vice-president post and his partner Inmaculada Herranz will become the Head of the Council for Coordinating the Plan of Citizen Income Guarantees.

Llorente and the Pabloites campaigned against joining the regional government, saying that “pressure on the Government of Page must be made with social movements, popular organisations and trade unions.” However, Llorente has now reassured everyone he accepts the decision while attempting to absolve himself of any personal responsibility for the political consequences of Podemos’ betrayal—issuing the saintly riposte, “I will not take up a post in García-Page’s government.”

Podemos is now indistinguishable from the PSOE in its pursuit of power in bourgeois institutions on a pro-capitalist programme and an imperialist foreign policy.

In an opinion piece for *El Confidencial*, journalist Ignacio Varela declared, “Podemos has been tamed and it’s part of the system like everyone else ... Iglesias’ party is rapidly becoming a force that represents a stable sector of society, containing it within the walls of the institutions, and, from its lateral spaces [the Pabloites], it helps maintain the ecological balance of the political system...”

Such remarks from conservative figures such as Varela, who only a year ago were railing against Iglesias and Podemos as enemies of the state, are a devastating exposure of Anticapitalistas and the United Secretariat (USec). They bear responsibility for the political monster they helped create in 2014.

A leaked internal bulletin at the time explained how Anticapitalistas would not be “too explicit” in their new project, but would be “in charge” of promoting it “organisationally and politically.” They courted the rising media celebrity and former Communist Party apparatchik Iglesias as the “public face” of Podemos.

Llorente makes clear his own role on the Podemos web site, explaining in his biography how “we helped to promote Podemos. I’m in Podemos from the beginning and I believe in the potential of this project.”

At each point when Podemos junked another element of its vaguely radical founding manifesto, Anticapitalistas made the obligatory protests, before moving on to next business. The integration of Anticapitalistas’ leadership into high-profile positions in Podemos’ local, city and regional organisations continued apace.

To deflect criticism away from the role of the Anticapitalistas in Castilla-La Mancha, Isidro López and Raúl Camargo, leading Pabloites of Podemos in the Madrid region, penned a piece in *Publico* that was reproduced in *International Viewpoint* on August 8, calling the deal an “historic error.”

Making just one fleeting reference to their man Llorente, who now has the deciding vote on legislation in the regional Congress, López and Camargo complain that joining the government “for some posts in the state apparatus” provides

the “first experimental test” of “a profound turn by the Podemos political leadership, towards a dynamic of governmental agreements with the PSOE” and prefigures the formation of “an alternative government” nationally.

The re-invention of Sánchez as an oppositional figure “smacks of a manoeuvre of political marketing,” they add. They warn that Podemos is being transformed “into a left-wing flank for the regeneration of the regime,” condemning it “to political irrelevance, and in the worst case, its implosion ...”

Their sole concern is to prevent the working class and youth from turning to a revolutionary alternative, so that they focus on developing “the counterweight of a sufficiently strong political movement” as a supposed check on the Podemos leadership. In addition, they make clear they are in favour of continued collusion with the PSOE—as long as this is not so naked as forming coalitions. They declare, “It is not about simply maintaining a passive position—other paths can be explored with other political forces, including the PSOE, which do not involve entry into government, on the basis of punctual agreements up to partial accords on matters which correspond to the programmatic principles of Podemos.”

Such pathetic gyrations cannot conceal how the Pabloites deliberately set out to create a Spanish version of the left-talking but pro-capitalist Syriza party in Greece—with the aim of disarming workers in the face of mass unemployment, cuts in wages and services, growing poverty and stepped up militarism.

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