

Spain Socialists Signal Shift to Form Conservative Government



Madrid, October 6 (RHC)-- Following the resignation of Spain's Socialist Party leader, Pedro Sanchez, the party's new leader has said he is willing to form a government with the centrist Ciudadanos and the conservative ruling Popular Party, or PP, to avoid a third election.

Ciudadanos leader Albert Rivera has met with the Socialist Party's interim leader Javier Fernandez, and afterward told reporters that he appealed to him to "put the Spaniards before his party's political interests."

"Those who have not moved their tab until now must do it, and those who want to be president should go for the investiture," Rivera said to the press after the meeting.

Sanchez refused to back the minority PP-Ciudadanos government under the incumbent Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. However, an agreement between the Socialist Party, or PSOE, and the right-wing faction is likely to happen especially after Fernandez expressed frustration with the status quo, saying that the PSOE is turning into the left-wing "Podemos."

Podemos formed a political alliance with United Left following the last election and the anti-austerity coalition currently holds 71 seats in Congress, breaking the PSOE and PP's bipartisan 41-year stranglehold on Spanish politics.

With 118 seats in the parliament, the PSOE is the kingmaker in Spain's political system. Most of the party's members have already expressed their support for the idea of allowing Mariano Rajoy to form a minority government.

The deadline for this decision is October 31, and if there is no agreement between political parties in the 350-seat parliament, Spain will again hold elections in December, its third this year. Spain has been without a functioning government since the last round of elections in December and June failed to hand a convincing mandate to any political party.

With support from Ciudadanos and the small Coalicion Canaria, Rajoy controls 170 congressional seats and needs six more to reach the super-majority.

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