Beat: Politics

Sanchez fails to invest and must wait until Tuesday

Extraordinary session in the Parliament

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USPA NEWS - The Socialist candidate and acting Prime Minister, Pedro SÃ¡nchez, failed this Sunday in his first attempt to be sworn in as President of the Spanish Government, after falling short of the absolute majority required to be sworn in - he obtained 166 votes in favour, 165 against and 18 abstentions - and will have to wait until Tuesday, when he only needs a simple majority, to gain the confidence of Parliament.

“Spain will not be broken, the Constitution will not be broken.“ This is how the Socialist candidate and acting President of the Government, Pedro SÃ¡nchez, began his inaugural speech. "What is going to be broken here is the blockade of the progressive government democratically elected by the Spanish people," he added. According to the candidate, what is now beginning is "a new time for Spain, in which all of us here are called to participate." Pedro SÃ¡nchez came to Parliament with a government agreement with the extreme left represented in Podemos, the support of the Basque nationalists and the favourable vote of several regionalist parties, as well as the abstention of the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC in its Catalan acronym), which will allow him to be invested for a new mandate as Prime Minister on Tuesday 7 January in the second vote. This Sunday, the Socialist candidate obtained 166 votes in favour and 165 votes against, with 18 abstentions, far from the absolute majority - 176 votes - needed to be invested in the first round.

In his opening speech, Pedro SÃ¡nchez was very careful not to refer to any of the major issues that concern the Spanish people. He did not reveal the content of his agreement with ERC, nor did he explain his government's economic programme or, throughout the debate, say anything that might upset his government partners or the groups that support him. He did not do so when the Basque independence fighters - heirs to the defunct terrorist organisation ETA - and Catalans insulted King Felipe VI, calling him authoritarian and anti-democratic, nor when the centre-right block in the House reproached him for not defending the victims of terrorism.

The leader of the conservative Partido Popular, Pablo Casado, called the government's agreement with the extreme left and the independentistas who want to break Spain, and its passivity in defending the Head of State and the victims of ETA, "infamous". Casado confronted the Socialist candidate with a long series of statements by SÃ¡nchez himself in which he rejected any agreement with the extreme left and stated that he would never cross any red line marked by the Constitution. In his initial speech, Pedro SÃ¡nchez had called for dialogue as the basis of his government's policy, and Casado reminded him that he had never wanted to talk to the conservative Partido Popular, the centrist Ciudadanos Party or the extreme right-wing Vox group, which is the third largest group in Parliament.

"It is true that we would have preferred to form a Socialist government made up of socialists and enriched by prestigious independents. It is also true that we opened up in July to a coalition government with Podemos. And it is true, finally, that these negotiations did not bear fruit, as everyone knows," said candidate Pedro SÃ¡nchez, adding: "It is of little use to point out blame. It is more useful to try again on new bases that ensure the two conditions that made understanding difficult months ago: the principle of cohesion and the principle of suitability."

With these principles in mind, Sanchez broke down some of his government's projects. Projects in which he has taken on much of the ideology of the extreme left represented in Podemos. "We defend and will defend the social market economy, as stipulated in the Constitution. We believe that the market is essential for the generation of social wealth and prosperity [...] We believe in a social market economy; but we do not believe in a market society. Because we cannot give the market the health, the security, the future, the life of the people. As much as we believe in private initiative, we believe in universal public services," he argued.

"Spain is the education of our children, the public pensions of our elderly, the public health care of our relatives; Spain is the relief of our neighbours in disasters; the comfort of our journeys; the safety of our streets; Spain is also the taxes we pay in solidarity to pay for all this," he explained, before announcing a tax increase on large fortunes: "Money is not always better in the pocket of those who have a fortune. Often the money is better in the schools and libraries that make us wiser, in the hospitals that keep us healthier, in the roads that connect us, in the pensions that protect our old age, in the Police stations and courts that guarantee rights and freedoms."

With regard to Catalonia, after obtaining the guarantee that ERC would abstain from voting, Pedro SÃ¡nchez undertook to take the

independence conflict out of the courts, returning it to politics. The announcement was harshly criticised by the centre-right bloc, which considered that Pedro SÃ¡nchez's government would leave the Constitution unprotected and open the way to the dismemberment of Spain.

The law states that if the candidate does not obtain the support of Parliament in the first vote, a second vote will be held 48 hours later. It will be on Tuesday that SÃ¡nchez will submit for the second time to the confidence of the House, for which he needs a simple majority - more votes in favour than against - which he is assured of.

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