

Zapatero looks sure to continue as leader of Spain's socialist party

The 36th Congress of the socialist party is seeking to adopt policies in a bid regenerate democracy

RICHARD MCCRANN

Delegates from Spain's socialist party (PSOE) look set to confirm José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as their leader. The 972 delegates attending the party's Congress, are expected to vote in favour of keeping Zapatero, who is also the current Spanish prime minister, as their secretary general for the next four years. The party is currently holding its 36th Congress in Madrid, and delegates heard from the president of the PSOE, Manuel Chaves, who said: "socialists have a new opportunity" as in 1982 to undertake a new process of transformation and put in place democratic regeneration." He praised the role of Zapatero for helping them win the election on 14 March saying "his convictions and his talent" helped them to victory.

The secretary of the PSOE, José Blanco, highlighted the fact the PSOE was 125 years old, but they had to work for the future and for the citizens of Spain. He said that since the year 2000, when they elected Zapatero as their leader for the first time, it signalled "a change" and



Zapatero and his wife, Sonsoles Espinosa, at the congress / EFE

the socialists had reached an understanding with the majority of the people.

He stated that during the past four years the party had gained the backing of the socialists leaders, their loyalty and the generous cooperation of all of them so that in future they would achieve good results. He added that the election victory, far from leaving the socialists in a state of disbelief, it had revived them and they would continue the project of creating a new society to overcome new problems for the citizens of Spain. He confirmed that during the three day meeting, delegates would debate the history of the party, its political strategy and it will vote on policies that will direct the party over the next four years.

It is widely expected that the PSOE meeting will elect a new executive for the party, that will have the same number of women as well as men. Zapatero has also proposed to reduce the number of regional secretaries, from the current seven to be pared down to two. José Bono, the defense minister, claims he is more content compared to four years ago.

Screen legend Marlon Brando dies aged 80 after illness

Film legend Marlon Brando has died aged 80. He is famous for his roles in the films *On the Waterfront* and *The Godfather*. Brando, who had been ill for some time, was regarded as a pivotal actor of the post-war generation. He made his name in the classic 1953 film *The Wild One* and went on to make 40 films. He is best remembered for his role as the mafia leader Don Corleone in the 1972 hit *The Godfather*. Brando made his 1950 screen debut in *The Men*, a role for which he is reported to have prepared himself by lying in bed for a month, to play the part of paraplegic.

A year later he was nominated for an oscar for best actor for his role as Stanley Kowalski in the screen version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, also starring Vivien Leigh. But he won his first oscar in 1954, for his part as washed-up boxer Terry Malloy in the film *On the Waterfront*. though many believe he should have won a second nomination for his misunderstood role as a rebel in *The Wild One*. He earned his second oscar for his awe inspiring role as Don Corleone, in *The Godfather*, a film directed by Francis Ford Coppola in 1972. Following his contro-



Marlon Brando in his prime / EFE

versial role in the *Last Tango in Paris*, which showed some graphic sex scenes, Brando opted out of a leading man role, playing cameo roles for huge paypackets. His small role in *Apocalypse Now*, which saw him team up again with director Francis Ford Coppola, in the early 80's. He allegedly was paid millions of dollars for a small screen appearance during the film.

British soldier to stand trial over Iraq shooting when boy injured last year during incident

AGENCIES

A British soldier is to go before a court over the shooting of a boy in Iraq, the attorney general has confirmed. Private Alexander Johnston has been charged with unlawful wounding. It follows an incident in southern Iraq, in September last year. Private Johnston, of the 1st Battalion, faces an alternative charge of negligent handling of a weapon.

"The Army Prosecuting Authority directed that Private Johnston of

the 1st Battalion Kings Own Scottish Borderers should stand trial for one offence of unlawful wounding. The matter relates to a non fatal shooting of an Iraqi boy," said the Attorney General's statement. If he is found guilty he could face a prison sentence in a civilian prison or detention in a military corrective training centre. The British army is currently holding several internal investigations into allegations of misconduct by British troops, and four soldiers face court martials.

Jordan offers to send troops to Iraq to help boost stability in the country for the new government

AGENCIES

Jordan has offered to send troops to Iraq in a bid to help the stabilise the country. The new Iraqi government is considering the offer but the deputy foreign minister said his government is expected to reject it. He told the BBC that the interim prime minister, Iyad Allawi, had instead, requested troops from Egypt, Bahrain and Oman. King Abdullah told the BBC, "If the Iraqis ask us for help directly it will be very difficult

for us to say no. If they fail, then we will pay the price." He is the first Arab leader to consider sending troops to Iraq and the move is likely to satisfy the United States. "To have fellow Arabs patrolling I'm sure would be welcome," an US official told Reuters news agency. The feeling in Iraq is for less foreign troops but, but the majority of people would find Arab forces easier to accept than the current coalition made up mainly US troops.

MIDDLE EAST

Israeli army kills two in Gaza

Two Palestinians were killed in Gaza yesterday by Israeli gunfire, one in Rafah refugee camp at the end of a raid to uncover weapons smuggling tunnels and the other near a Jewish settlement, witnesses and medics said. Yassir al-Arja, 25, identified by residents as Rafah's Brazil neighbourhood as a scrap dealer, was shot dead while picking through rubble during the Israeli operation near the border with Egypt.

TERROR

Threat of Qaeda-linked attacks

Muslim militants claiming links to al Qaeda vowed new attacks on Europe once a "truce" offered by Osama bin Laden expires in two weeks, newspapers said yesterday. Governments and analysts played down the threat, noting the group in question had made unfounded claims before; French president Jacques Chirac said he took any such report seriously but that little could be done to improve already tight security.

AFGHANISTAN

Polls could be mid-October

Elections in Afghanistan scheduled for September could be held by mid-October at the latest, a government official said yesterday, as more people were reported killed in attacks by militants determined to disrupt the vote. President Hamid Karzai called repeatedly during recent international visits for the elections to be held in September. But in pronouncements in local Dari and Pashto languages, he mentioned holding them in Mizan, a month of the Afghan calendar running from September 22 to October 21.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

Palestinians kill collaborator

Palestinian militants publicly executed an accused collaborator with Israel with machineguns in a West Bank town square yesterday after a throng of Palestinian onlookers called for him to die. Wild celebrations broke out among the hundreds of spectators after four gunmen from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, part of president Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, shot father-of-two Muhammad Rafiz Daragh-meh, 45, in Qabatiya.

SUDAN

Rebel groups shun peace talks

Rebel groups from Sudan's troubled Darfur region will not attend peace talks in Chad, because they accuse the government of violating a ceasefire. The Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement are refusing to go to the talks in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, which are taking place after the Sudanese government told the United States it would speed up negotiations to end the the fighting.

PHILIPPINES

Typhoon toll rises to 23

The death toll from the strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines this year rose to 23 yesterday, as rescue workers rushed to clear landslides and send food and medicine there.