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PREPARE FOR POWER

Madrid.—The leaders of all of Spain's main political parties invited their supporters on Friday night to prepare for power, as campaigning for one of the tightest national elections in decades drew to a close.

No single party will get an overall majority in today's ballot, and opinion polls suggest all five leading contenders have a realistic chance of playing a role in government.

Divisive and often ill-tempered, the

election has been fought mainly on emotive topics - notably issues of national identity linked to Catalonia's drive for independence - with the economy taking a rare back seat.

With campaigning having ended at midnight, party leaders remained mostly non-committal about potential alliances after the vote - though Spain's political landscape has effectively coalesced around two distinct electoral blocs, one on the left and the other on the right.

Outgoing Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez - who made overtures to far-left Podemos during a televised debate on Tuesday - cited U.S. President Donald Trump in warning supporters against allowing a right-wing alliance to take office.

That would be formed of three parties and include radical newcomer Vox, part of a broader far-right movement that has already entered government in some European countries, notably Italy.

"No one gave Trump any chance of be-

coming president and he is. No one thought (far-right Jair) Bolsonaro would become president of Brazil, and he has," Sanchez told a crowd of around 3,000 in the working class Madrid suburb of Vallecas. Under the most optimistic scenario for the Socialists, Sanchez could stay on as leader of the euro zone's fourth largest economy with just Podemos as an ally.

But most polls have shown them likely to need backing from smaller nationalist parties, notably from Catalonia.