

Spain's new Podemos party a political fraud—Part one

Alejandro López
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Podemos (We Can), the new party led by academic and TV presenter Pablo Iglesias and initiated by the Anticapitalist Left (Izquierda Anticapitalista, IA), seeks above all to politically disarm the working class.

The need of the ruling class for such a party is clear. For six years since the eruption of the global capitalist crisis, Spanish workers—like those across Europe—have been subject to a social counterrevolution. Drawn up by the European Union and implemented by governments of both the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the current Popular Party (PP), this has led to mass unemployment of 26 percent officially, 56 percent amongst youth, and widespread poverty.

There are now 686,600 households in which none of their members have an income of any kind. Wages have been slashed by 7 percent on average, according to the UGT union, and poverty now affects nearly a third of Spanish children, according to the NGO Cáritas. The same organisation published a report showing that the richest 20 percent in Spain controlled 7.5 times more wealth than the poorest 20 percent, describing the wealth gap as the widest in Europe.

The working class has attempted to fight back through mass demonstrations and hundreds of strikes. Such has been the resistance that the government is drafting a Citizens Law, which curtails the right to protest and imposes heavy fines and imprisonment for “disobedience.” Labour and Employment Minister Fátima Bañez is citing the “need for a law of minimum services” for all strikes, which will neuter industrial action.

This opposition has been strangled by the trade unions, CCOO and UGT, which have helped implement the austerity measures and labour reforms. In this vacuum, support has grown for the United Left

(Izquierda Unida, IU), a coalition of middle-class parties including regionalist and ecologist groups dominated by the Stalinist Communist Party (PCE), which is currently the fourth largest force in parliament, polling 14.7 percent.

However, the real colours of IU are showing through. In Andalusia, the IU is in a regional coalition government with the PSOE and cut the budget by €2.6 billion over the last two years, including 10.8 percent in health care and 8.6 percent in education. In the southwestern region of Extremadura, IU is propping up the Popular Party.

It is under these conditions that Podemos has been created. Its model is SYRIZA in Greece—a bourgeois party whose leaders publicly indulge in “left” demagoguery, while privately reassuring the leaders of world imperialism that they have nothing to fear should it come to power.

The IA has its roots in the 1953 split from the Fourth International led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel. The International Committee of the Fourth International was established to defend Marxism in 1953 against this tendency, which abandoned the struggle to build independent revolutionary parties in favour of acting as advocates for the existing mass reformist and Stalinist parties and liquidated section after section of the Trotskyist movement around the world.

IA's Podemos project is part of an international regroupment of petty bourgeois groups and high-profile individuals led by the Pabloites, with the aim of preventing a rebellion by the working class against the social democratic parties and the trade union bureaucracy and channelling discontent into supposedly radical, but pro-capitalist, formations.

Most recently, Alan Thornett's Socialist Resistance

group, the British section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, has founded Left Unity on the basis of the most minimal programme in order to leave the door open to sections of the bureaucracy it hopes to win.

In France the Pabloite Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (New Anti-capitalist Party, NPA) presented joint lists with former Socialist Party minister Jean-Luc Melenchon's Parti de Gauche (Left Party) in the recent municipal elections.

In Spain, the IA is very conscious that IU's collaboration in the austerity drive of the bourgeois parties is leaving what it considers to be a dangerous vacuum. An internal bulletin of IA's highest body, the Confederal Secretariat, leaked to Eldiario.org, speaks about how "the right shift of IU ... is destined to prepare a 'left' government with the PSOE... It opens spaces to the left that we must fill."

A leading member of IA's Confederal Secretariat told *El Diario* that "IU has to decide, and we as an organization have to differentiate ourselves from them, especially for what is happening in Andalusia in their alliance with the PSOE."

In January this year IA created Podemos to stand for the European Elections. A leaked internal bulletin explains, "The implication of our organization would not be too explicit, but we will be in charge of promoting the project organisationally and politically."

Leading IA members involved in Podemos include Jaime Pastor, USTEA trade union delegate Teresa Rodriguez, responsible for "citizen participation" within Podemos, and Miguel Urban, head of the Madrid Anti-Capitalists and its main candidate in the 2011 general elections, responsible for organization.

The bulletin explains how it established an election process to select who "from a number of people with media coverage" would become its "public face." This would open "the option of connecting to sectors of the population dissatisfied with traditional leftist organizations," it explained.

The public face chosen is Pablo Iglesias, a political science professor at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and contributor to various bourgeois and radical media outlets, including *Público*, *Kaosenlared*, *Diagonal* and *Rebelión*. His media profile has risen through his hosting of the Internet-based programme *La Tuerka* and his frequent selection as the representative

of "left-wing" opinion on radio and television shows.

More importantly, Iglesias was selected because of his links to IU. He was a member of the Communist Party's (PCE) youth movement, the Communist Youth of Spain, and has remained close to the IU—becoming its adviser and advertising campaign producer in 2011. He participated in the "Call to the Left" in 2010, IU's failed attempt to regroup the pseudo-left around support for the PSOE. (See "The refoundation of Spain's United Left: A turn to the banks")

Immediately after its creation, Podemos continued IA's traditional orientation towards the Stalinist-led IU. Iglesias called for alliances with other forces that defend "decency, democracy and human rights... It is a call to unity."

Podemos's January Manifesto stated, "[W]e want a candidate who is opposed to both the cuts in the name of austerity applied by the PP government in the state but also by the PSOE and other parties in different Autonomous Communities," avoiding mentioning the IU, which is currently imposing brutal austerity measures in Andalusia.

Iglesias offered to elect one "candidate against austerity."

During the negotiations between IU and Podemos, a joint declaration stated that "there is no dispute that both forces are rowing in the same direction."

After weeks of negotiations a joint candidature failed when IU rejected one of Podemos' "non-negotiable proposal[s]" of open citizen primaries within IU. The PCE rejected the proposal, which would have weakened it in the IU coalition.

Even then Iglesias stated the two would "maintain dialogue" and that, under no circumstances, if there are "disagreements will there be a weakening in unity at the time of political action," i.e., they will be silent on IU's austerity policies. *To be continued*



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