

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

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This is the second and concluding part of an analysis of Podemos. Part one was published Wednesday, April 30.

Other figureheads of Podemos include Juan Carlos Monedero, an academic and adviser to both the IU from 2000 to 2005 and former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

Iglesias also attempted to integrate a personal friend and colleague of Political Science at Complutense University, Jorge Verstyngue. A former Popular Party deputy, Verstyngue has defended explicitly xenophobic and racist measures against immigrants and has sympathised openly with Marine Le Pen and the fascist French National Front. In the end, he was not allowed to talk in one of their public meetings after internal criticisms forced Iglesias to renounce his collaboration.

Jaime Pastor, one of the leaders of IA, commented that “this is not a personal matter against him. This is because our discourse is in contradiction to what we defend.” This flows inevitably from the fact that Podemos’s political programme is pro-capitalist and nationalist. In less than a month, it junked the meagre reformist demands it had published in its January Manifesto, to present a far more acceptable programme for the ruling class.

For example, in the January statement, Podemos had included the demand for the “nationalisation of private banking”.

This had nothing to do with the socialist demand for the nationalisation of banks and major corporations under the democratic control of a workers’ government. It was in line with the nationalisation by the capitalist state of insolvent banks that has taken place across Europe, which amounts to the nationalisation of their debts so that working people

must pick up the bill.

Even this demand has been eliminated in case its message is misunderstood. Instead, a new measure proposes the “Reorientation of the financial system to consolidate a banking system in the service of citizens and the medium companies.”

How the financial system can be “reoriented” in the interests of its “citizens” without the abolition of the capitalist profit system is never explained.

Similarly, the January Manifesto proposed the socialisation of energy companies. This has been changed to the “recovery of public control in strategic sectors of the economy: telecommunications, energy, food, transportation, health care, pharmaceutical and education through public acquisition of a part thereof, which guarantees a majority stake in its public councils administration.”

This amounts to a proposal that one or another bourgeois government, in which Podemos undoubtedly hopes to play its part, will respect private capital.

Another feeble recipe in January was the need to “tackle fiscal fraud” and corruption. This has now evolved into a major part of the new programme with a whole chapter dedicated to “Prosecution and tougher penalties for tax offenses.”

This epitomizes the cynical attempt to blame the crisis on a few capitalist tax evaders, while diverting from the fact that this is intrinsic to the capitalist profit system.

The final programme shares the original proposal to reject “redundancies for companies with profits”. Under conditions of worldwide economic crisis, this proposal means that Podemos accepts as entirely legitimate that companies sack workers when suffering losses.

Critically, the manifesto does not mention the trade

unions which have been the primary means through which the ruling class has imposed wage cuts, redundancies and suppressed any resistance to its austerity measures.

Another chapter defends the creation of a “Citizens debt audit”, the purpose of which will be “to determine which parts [of Spain’s national debt] are legitimate; the illegitimate debt will not be paid.”

A debt audit has been a major plank of SYRIZA’s programme, which recently reported that it considered just 5 percent of Greece’s debt illegitimate. The real significance of the debt audit demand is that it is intended as a signal to the financial elite that any bourgeois government in which the pseudo-left play a part will not mount a genuine challenge to its interests.

The manifesto goes on to support “real democracy” based on “sovereignty of the peoples and their right to decide freely their future.”

Podemos supports the holding of a referendum on November 9 passed by the Catalan bourgeois parties and supported by the pseudo-left. This has nothing to do with upholding “democracy”, but is a manoeuvre by a section of the regional bourgeoisie which aims to create a capitalist mini-state that can be made more attractive to the global corporate elite through tax cuts and stepped-up exploitation of the working class. By supporting Catalan nationalism, Podemos makes clear its intention to prevent workers from advancing their independent class interests in a unified struggle by subordinating them to one or another wing of the bourgeoisie.

The January Manifesto omitted any mention of the new party’s attitude to the European Union. This has now been rectified. While there is still barely any mention of the EU’s role in imposing mass poverty and unemployment across the continent, the latest version makes clear that Podemos is completely loyal to the EU—calling for its “refounding” and “democratization” in conscious opposition to the necessary struggle by workers to unite against the big business bloc in the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe.

In January Podemos called for the “rejection of military interventions, an exit from NATO and a firm defence of solidarity relations with other peoples.”

Since then, the same EU that is endorsed by Podemos has joined in the reckless moves against Russia, utilising the western-backed fascist coup in Kiev. There

are open calls, led by Germany, for the EU to be openly refashioned as an imperialist military alliance, directed in the first instance, against Moscow.

True to form, Podemos’ demand for a NATO exit has been ditched in favour of a vague commitment to a referendum on Spain’s membership, while it speaks of the EU having a “committed role in world peace”, as if the EU wasn’t up to its necks in the provocations against Ukraine and elsewhere.

Of course, the pro-imperialist positions of the Pabloites are not new. The IA openly supported western intervention in Libya and has supported the West’s proxy Al Qaeda forces in Syria.

Nonetheless, the speed with which the new organisation has cast off positions that could be considered vaguely “leftish” is telling. Having tested the waters, Podemos has understood loud and clear just what is expected of it by the Spanish bourgeoisie and is responding accordingly.

Concluded



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