

Spain's Podemos presents its pro-capitalist economic programme

Alejandro López
9 December 2014

Podemos is a Spanish pseudo-left party created in January for the European elections by the Pabloite Anti-Capitalist Left (Izquierda Anticapitalista, IA). Its purpose is to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the major parties.

Podemos has presented its economic programme for next year's parliamentary elections. In the 60 pages written by economists Juan Torres and Vicenç Navarro and presented by Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias and sociologist Carolina Bescansa last Thursday, the party has officially abandoned the anti-capitalist pretensions of its programme for the European elections held last May.

The programme declares that the main aim of Podemos in government—some polls suggest it is currently the leading political force in Spain—should be to “guarantee political stability generating the maximum security and confidence in the management that will be undertaken.”

It warns that Podemos could receive a negative reaction from the financial markets and a rise in the interest rates on Spanish bonds, “even though the reality is that [Podemos] is the insurance policy that will resolve Spain's problems, like corruption and the distrust in the institutions, that all the economists know are some of the main negative factors for the development of economic activity.”

These lines are a pledge to the financial elite that any government in which Podemos plays a part will not mount a genuine challenge to its interests. Iglesias was even more blunt than the document, declaring that Podemos will not “sell smoke” like the populist promises of the ruling Popular Party (PP) or its predecessor the Socialist Party (PSOE), but will aim to be seen “with good eyes” by the business community.

The economic crisis in Spain is not rooted in

corruption or misguided “neo-liberal” policies, which Navarro and Torres have, for years, in common with the pseudo-left as a whole, blamed for all economic problems. These are merely symptoms of a deeper systemic crisis of world capitalism.

These same objective conditions have undermined the so-called Scandinavian Social Democratic model, which the two economists uphold and Iglesias maintains is at the heart of Podemos's economic programme. Since the 2008 economic crisis, Norway, Sweden and Finland have all imposed austerity measures. In Finland and Sweden there are now open discussions underway to end their official neutrality and join NATO in its campaign of military encirclement of Russia.

In October, Podemos all but abandoned its demand for a “citizens' audit” of Spain's public debt with the declaration that “the goal is not to not pay the debt ... We can try to promote an orderly debt restructuring process in Europe and especially in the peripheral countries...”

Navarro and Torres are now advising Podemos not to use the word “restructuring.” Instead they talk about “negotiating with the markets flexible payments of debt,” “grace periods” and “partial ‘haircuts’.”

With regards to pensions, Podemos has abandoned its previous demand to reduce the age of retirement to 60. They are now calling for it to remain at 65 and not increase to 67 by 2027 as negotiated between the PP government, the unions and big business in 2013.

Podemos calls for a 35-hour workweek and the strengthening of the unions so they can increase salaries and pensions. But, again, the transformation of the unions into arms of management and the primary means through which the ruling class has imposed wage cuts, redundancies and suppressed any resistance

to its austerity measures is a universal phenomenon.

With regard to the universal basic income that was another main proposal in the European elections, the draft now vaguely speaks of “aid” for “any person who has no income.”

The economic programme also omits previous proposals with respect to nationalisation. In January, the party’s manifesto promised nationalisation of the banks and energy companies. By the time of the May elections, this had changed to the “recovery of public control in strategic sectors ... through public acquisition of a part thereof, which guarantees a majority stake ...”

The abolition of private employment agencies has also disappeared from Podemos’s new programme.

Any polemic against Podemos is like shooting a moving target. As soon as an article on Podemos has been published, it becomes obsolete due to the rapidity of its right-wing trajectory. The actions of Iglesias have followed a similar course.

Iglesias recently applauded the speech of “brave” Pope Francis in the European parliament, who had departed from the rhetoric of his predecessors and condemned “the scandal of the financial powers who are kidnapping our democracy.” Afterwards, Iglesias called a press conference in Strasbourg to praise the speech and to state that he “would like to meet with the pope, in the Vatican or in [the Madrid neighbourhood of] Vallecas, wherever possible. ... We would agree on a lot of things.”

This is the Pope who has been accused by priests and lay workers of handing them over to the torturers as part of the “cleansing” of the Church of “leftists” during the “Dirty War” waged by the Argentine military junta between 1976 and 1983.

Days before, Iglesias met with the president of the United Spanish Military Association (Asociación Unificada de Militares Españoles), Jorge Bravo, with the objective of “constructing a political programme that includes the inalienable rights of the military as citizens and offers a modern vision of the armed forces to the citizens.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, Iglesias declared, “Podemos assumes as legitimate the demands of the military associations and promises to defend them. For this reason, the Coordination Council of Podemos will maintain a strong collaboration with the representatives of the associations of the armed forces ...”

The bloody role of both the army and the Catholic Church in 20th century Spain has been well documented, most brutally during the crushing of the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s and the imposition of a decades-long dictatorship under General Francisco Franco. For someone like Iglesias who claims to be on the left to glorify the Pope and meet with the military reveals the true character of this organisation.

The pro-capitalist economic programme now presented by Podemos exposes the criminal role played by IA. In a recent statement, after expressing reservations about the bureaucratic structure that was imposed at the founding congress and the way it was marginalised by the Iglesias faction, IA conceded it would “adapt to the new framework” and “continue to work as loyally as we have until now, doing everything in our power to ensure that we can win the elections ... to transform society and not disappoint the hopes that millions of people are placing in us.”

It is inevitable that those hopes will be betrayed by Podemos, whose purpose is to mobilise a section of the middle class on a patriotic pro-capitalist programme.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact