

Spain: Podemos seeks to demobilise popular opposition to war

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Following the Paris terrorist attacks on November 13, some 60 pseudo-left and Stalinist parties, trade unions and 102 individuals in Spain issued a manifesto entitled “Not in Our Name.”

Most of the signatories are members of Podemos, the pseudo-left party led by Pablo Iglesias, although this is not indicated in the manifesto. The party did not sign the document in its own name in order to avoid compromising its incorporation into the Spanish political establishment and its relationship with the pro-imperialist, pro-war Socialist Party (PSOE). Podemos may find itself in a coalition government with the PSOE after the general election being held on December 20.

The manifesto called on the Spanish population to rally on November 28 in Madrid and other cities, to “condemn the terrorist attacks in Paris and Lebanon and to reject both the bombings against the civilian population of Syria and ineffective restrictions to democracy in the name of security, as well as the militaristic foreign policy initiated by Bush, Blair and Aznar [former heads of the US, UK and Spain].”

The manifesto has nothing to do with the struggle against war, much less the “start of a possible movement against imperialist interventions and wars, in the streets, and in the works centres,” as claimed by the pseudo-left Clase contra Clase.

The manifesto omits any mention of the imperialist foreign policy of the current Popular Party (PP) government and the war-mongering of the PSOE. It ignores the actual roots of the Islamic State (ISIS) in the build-up of Islamist groups by the US and its allies to overthrow the Syrian regime. It legitimises the “war on terror” narrative, arguing, “If the response to such barbarism involves suspending rights, cutting back on liberties and locking ourselves in our homes, the

victory of terrorism will be complete.”

In fact, the blow-back attacks by Islamists in Europe and the US have provided a pretext for the enormous build-up of police-state powers at home, which is aimed, not at terrorism, but at the threat posed by the working class, impoverished by austerity measures.

The manifesto makes no mention of the Anti-Jihadist Pact that the PP and PSOE signed following the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris last January and which the new Citizens party subsequently joined. The pact has been followed by further curbs on democratic rights, including strengthening the penal code and state of emergency legislation and more surveillance measures.

The organisers’ bankrupt perspective and failure to mobilise their own memberships (the CCOO union has more than 1 million members, and Podemos has 385,000) ensured that only a few thousand protesters turned up in the capital, and a few hundred at venues elsewhere.

The poor attendance at the demonstrations does not reflect a lessening of opposition to war among working people and youth. The drive to war is deeply unpopular. The latest survey by the newspaper *El Mundo* shows that despite the non-stop propaganda and atmosphere of fear being whipped up by the media, 53 percent of the population are hostile to an attack on Syria with only 35 percent in favour.

What has taken place is a deliberate demobilisation of the millions who came around the 2003 “No to War” movement in protest at the US-led war in Iraq supported by the PP government of José Maria Aznar. Over 90 percent of the population opposed the war, and millions went out on the streets.

In March 2004, Aznar lost the general election three days after Al-Qaeda terrorists killed 191 people in a

series of train bombings. The PSOE, which had opposed the war, reflecting criticisms of Aznar's subordination to the US by sections of the Spanish ruling class, became the undeserved beneficiary of anti-war sentiment and won the election.

Once in government, the PSOE withdrew from Iraq but soon increased the number of troops in Afghanistan, sent more troops to missions in Africa and the Middle East, and in 2011 participated in the Libyan War. Most of the pseudo-left parties that had opposed the Iraq war followed suit, becoming a new constituency for imperialism and promoting interventions under the cynical banner of "human rights."

In Libya, these parties, and many of the individuals signing the manifesto, like "jurist and human rights activist" Gerardo Pisarello (in reality, vice-mayor of Barcelona for the Barcelona in Common platform, which includes Podemos), defended or encouraged NATO's bombing campaign and branded NATO's proxy forces on the ground as "revolutionaries." Libya has witnessed 30,000 deaths, wholesale destruction, and an ongoing civil war.

Today, Spain's ruling elite is determined not to be left out in the re-division and re-colonisation of the world that is taking place. It is seeking, in particular, to strengthen its influence and protect its interests in its former colonial possessions, including Latin America and Africa, where it is pursuing an aggressive "pivot to the South." Spanish soldiers are currently taking part in 10 land, air and naval missions on African soil.

An overriding concern of the ruling elite in Spain, as amongst its imperialist rivals, is how to stifle opposition to war and militarism. This is the critical role being played by Podemos. It calls for Spain to remain within NATO and recently recruited former Chief of the Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez Fernández to stand for the party in the December 20 general election. It dubbed Rodríguez, who led Spanish forces in Libya, Afghanistan and Lebanon, the "defender of democracy within the army" and an advocate of "weapons being used in the last resort."

This week, the Podemos foreign affairs spokesperson, Pablo Bustinduy, criticised Spain's absence in new developments in Latin America, including the peace negotiations with FARC guerrillas in Colombia and the "normalisation" discussions between Cuba and the

United States. Bustinduy declared that Spain had a "privileged position" and "interlocutory ability," so "why are we not taking a more active role in mediation and collaboration with them?"

This is an international phenomenon, with similar tendencies using whatever "left", "anti-austerity" and "anti-war" credentials they possess in the service of the bourgeoisie and to advance the interests of the affluent layers of "left" academics, union functionaries, parliamentarians and professionals to which they belong.



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