

Spanish media promote Anticapitalistas' and Podemos' "back to the streets" campaign

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A major campaign has emerged in the Spanish bourgeois media around Anticapitalistas member and European Member of Parliament for Podemos Miguel Urban. He has been interviewed in the newspapers *El País*, *Europa press* and *El Español* and in numerous television and radio stations and was allowed to publish manifestos in *El País* and *Público*.

Why, one wonders, is Podemos' so-called "extreme-left" Anticapitalistas faction being promoted by right-wing papers like *El Español* or longstanding mouthpieces of the big business Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) like *El País*? The answer is to be found in the growing political tensions and social anger in Spain and across Europe at eight years of austerity, police-state policies and pauperization of workers and youth. The right-wing, minority Popular Party (PP) government installed this autumn with PSOE support is deeply unpopular.

Podemos reacted to the PP's installation by calling a "back to the streets" campaign and staging a few media interventions in workers' struggles, closely coordinated with the PP, PSOE, the unions and pro-PP or pro-PSOE media. This falsely presents Podemos and the unions, who organized no opposition to previous PP and PSOE governments' austerity measures, as oppositional. It aims to trap escalating social anger behind a bankrupt, national perspective of supporting Podemos and block the emergence of a politically independent movement in the working class for socialism.

This is why *El País* published a column by Urbán and Teresa Rodríguez, Podemos' leader in the Andalusia region, titled "The Podemos We Want". It starts by hailing the manifesto signed by leading Pabloites and Podemos members, "For a Wave of Change". It defends "horizontalism, democracy, decentralization, plurality and pluralism" within Podemos in the upcoming national congress in February or March 2017.

The aim, according to Urbán and Rodríguez, is to regain the "openness and spontaneity of the origins" of Podemos. "We have the opportunity to construct a Podemos whose

internal processes allow and reflect the plurality of voices and ideas that exist" inside Podemos, they declare.

Behind the pseudo-left rhetoric—using code words like horizontalism, decentralization and pluralism long associated in European petty bourgeois politics to opposition to the struggle to build a Marxist vanguard party in the working class—is an attempt to boost illusions in Podemos, a well-tested party of the ruling class. Podemos is committed to NATO and the European Union (EU). It defends the savage EU austerity measures imposed on the Greek people by a government led by its sister party, Syriza.

The fiction that factions of Podemos have any perspective to offer to protests by workers and youth against the PP government is a political fraud. They speak for layers inside the Spanish ruling elite that have proven their class hostility to the workers.

In alliance with various local political organizations, Podemos members rule major cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Cádiz, Zaragoza, Valencia and Santiago de Compostela. They diverted €2.3 billion to debt servicing to pay off the banks. Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau attacked migrant street vendors and savagely broke a metro workers strike.

Podemos has stacked its electoral lists with former policemen, military, judges and other members of the state apparatus. Its most notorious figure is former Chief of the Spanish Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez, who commanded the Spanish forces in the US-led war in Libya in 2011.

At the regional level, Podemos has supported PSOE-led governments in Valencia, Aragon, Castilla la-Mancha, Extremadura and Asturias. Some of the premiers of these regions, like Guillermo Fernández Vara (Extremadura), Ximo Puig (Valencia) and Emiliano García-Page (Castilla la-Mancha) were at the forefront of the move to oust PSOE leader Pedro Sánchez and remove the last obstacles to installing a minority PP government tacitly backed by the PSOE.

The fact that Anticapitalistas now have access to *El País*' editorial page itself indicates the class interests their politics serve. *El País* is Spain's most widely read newspaper and

the main voice of Spanish imperialism since the fall of the fascist Franco dictatorship in 1978. It is owned by Prisa Group, one of the largest Spanish media conglomerates, holder of numerous television, radio stations, press and publishing houses, and led by José Luís Cebrián, whose father Vicente was a top Franco regime official and the director of the fascist Falange's main publication, *Arriba*.

In the recent period, *El País* most notoriously spearheaded calls for PSOE leader Pedro Sánchez's resignation, after he opposed attempts to install a minority PP government. The fact that it is now trumpeting the positions of Urban and Anticapitalistas only underscores that these initiatives are closely coordinated with the PSOE and the PP government's intelligence agencies, which were in close contact with *El País* and former PSOE Prime Minister Felipe González.

Urban and Rodríguez see workers struggles as events that must be harnessed behind Podemos' moves to increase its influence compared with other parties within the Spanish state machine. They continue, "The return to social mobilization becomes an indispensable condition to overcome the current institutional blockade and settle the balance towards the path of political and social change, allowing the development of constituent processes that will benefit the social majority."

In fact, Anticapitalistas is working through Podemos to block social opposition in the working class, in alliance with the unions and the PSOE. Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias has frenetically attended one workers' struggle after another—telecom workers, cleaners, and Coca-cola and Movistar workers. Iglesias and Urbán jointly participated in the occupation of a hospital in Madrid against the precariousness and job insecurity in the public health.

Podemos and the United Left also participated in a union-organized demonstration in Madrid in mid-December. The aim was not to call workers onto the streets to bring down the PP government, but to promote "social dialogue" to negotiate the character of the social cuts to be with the PP government. They did not even bother to call out all the unions' members and brought 30,000 people onto the streets—whereas the unions claim to have 2 million members; Podemos 441,151; and the United Left 71,578.

Such is the cynical character of the protest that the PSOE, whose abstention in October allowed the PP to return to government, sent its parliamentary spokesperson Mario Jiménez to join it. This came days after having supported the PP's budget limit, opening the door to a €5 billion austerity package for 2017.

Urbán and Rodríguez desperately cover up the reactionary role of Podemos and its alliance with Syriza. They state, "From the Greek experience, it is necessary to re-think the Europe we need. A Europe that does not fall back into

identities of the xenophobic extreme right and breaks with neo-liberal governance and austerity. To move precisely towards another idea of Europe we will need the strength and will to disobey the European institutions and the financial powers on which it has been built."

Here reality is again turned on its head. After its election in the January 2015 Greek elections, Syriza immediately formed a coalition government with the Independent Greeks (Anel), a right-wing, xenophobic and anti-Semitic party. Since then, the government of Alexis Tsipras has enforced austerity and assumed the role of the European Union's border and prison guard against refugees. Naturally, Podemos continued to collaborate closely with Syriza.

Urbán and Rodríguez end by calling for a "different" Podemos, one "committed to a coherent course, with a programme that contests democracy in the economy, recovering ideas such as basic income or the recovery for the common good of large electric or financial monopolies. With the common people at the center, it's time to prepare to beat the [PP-PSOE] grand coalition."

In other words, the authors are calling Podemos to return to a policy of cynically advancing demands they junked in a previous period, in order to maintain the pretense that they are an alternative to the establishment parties. In their view, this is essential to keeping social opposition under control—just as Syriza pledged, before its election, to reverse of privatizations and EU austerity measures while also pledging to repay Greece's debts to the EU and the banks.

By parading Urbán, the ruling class knows full well that these demands are just rhetoric, aimed to block social opposition and appeal to its upper-middle class constituency.



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