

Anticapitalistas in Spain's Podemos debate orienting to far-right Italian regime

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Leading members of Anticapitalistas, a Pabloite faction within Spain's Podemos party, have written an article criticising the embrace by top advisers of Podemos General Secretary Pablo Iglesias of the Italian government led by Matteo Salvini's far-right Lega party. They are concerned that such a line will expose them to criticisms from the left, amid growing strike action in the working class.

After long-standing Stalinists Héctor Illueca, Manuel Monereo and Julio Anguita posted an article titled "Fascism in Italy? Dignity Decree," the Pabloites responded with a piece titled "Dignity Decree: Fascism in Italy? A reply." The authors are leaders of Anticapitalistas, European parliamentarian Miguel Urbán and the editor of the Pabloite magazine *Viento Sur*, Brais Fernández.

The Illueca-Monereo-Anguita piece hails the Italian neo-fascists' "Dignity Decree" as a "turning point in the social policies applied in Italy since the eruption of neoliberalism" and "a remarkable effort to defend the Italian people against the lords of finance." The Stalinist trio are silent on Rome's austerity policies, military intervention in Libya, the terror campaign against the Roma and refugees, and its threat to deport 500,000 immigrants, a move which would require putting much of Italy under martial law.

In their friendly reply to the Stalinist writers, the Pabloites Urbán and Fernández criticise the "three heavyweights of the Spanish left" for incorrectly analysing the Salvini government. They write that "suddenly, through an analysis of the 'dignity decree' that is unrelated to the broader programme of the current Italian government, the final conclusion suddenly appears: the Italian government is not a fascist government. This conclusion, in that form, may be correct."

However, they write, "It is fundamental to understand the economic and social policy of a government by

analysing the whole of its drift, not to present a measure in isolation and in part. This 'isolationist method' prevents us, among other things, thinking of our own political project ... The left would limit itself to an observer position in which it 'supports,' 'rejects,' or 'criticizes' the initiatives of capitalist governments."

The Anticapitalistas do not condemn Illueca, Monereo and Anguita for endorsing the far right. The Stalinist trio have made very clear that broad factions of Podemos can support far-right policies. Rather, they fear that the emergence of explicit support for neo-fascists in Podemos will expose it to criticism on its left, namely, that Podemos simply offers tactical support or criticisms to parties trying to build far-right, militarist police states targeting the working class.

This criticism is bankrupt and unprincipled, and the opposition of Anticapitalistas to the growing support for neo-fascism in the leadership of Podemos is deeply cynical. While they accuse their Stalinist allies of whitewashing the Italian neo-fascists, they approve the public support given by Podemos to Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE) government, which, no less than Salvini, is building a police-state regime aimed at the working class.

In its first 100 days, the PSOE government, put into power by Podemos in a confidence vote, has passed the austerity budget of the previous right-wing Popular Party government, maintained its massive defence budget increase, and sold precision bombs to the Saudi Arabian regime in its genocidal war on the Yemeni population.

At the same time, it has continued the police-state clampdown on the Catalan nationalists under the fraudulent charge that they attempted to violently overthrow the state during last October's Catalan independence referendum. The PSOE is also maintaining its predecessor's law on public security, known as the "gag law." It curtails freedom of speech, prohibits mass gatherings and imposes fines for protests and comments

on social media.

On migration, the PSOE has deepened its predecessors' reactionary policies. It is summarily deporting migrants, a practice condemned by the European Court of Human Rights and the UN, and backing Morocco's crackdown on thousands of migrants trying to enter Europe through Spain's North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and by boat across the Mediterranean Sea. The raids by Moroccan security forces have so far left two young people dead.

The PSOE's ultra-reactionary policies, significantly, also end up strengthening Salvini. He recently used it to mock criticisms of his mass deportations of migrants, saying: "If Spain does it it's okay, but when I propose it then I'm inhumane and a racist and a fascist."

If various factions of Podemos are now backing reactionary regimes in Italy and in Spain itself, including far-right forces, it is because its political personnel are drawn from sections of the affluent middle class indifferent to democratic rights and hostile to the working class. These forces themselves are now compelled to admit that there is growing support for far-right and fascist nationalism within their own ranks.

Urbán and Fernández state that it is "urgent to open a debate in the left on the shock over the rise of the far-right at a global level." This is because "it seems there are sectors on the left with a certain fascination for the themes of the far right: protectionism, national sovereignty and anti-migration policies." This leads "the most favourable approach to the development of an emancipatory project to progressively disappear: less and less is said about democracy, wealth redistribution through the expropriation of large companies and the expansion of rights, and more on the issues proposed by the extreme right."

In fact, Podemos has emerged as one of the most fervent proponents of national chauvinism. The fascination of Iglesias for patriotism and Spanish nationalism is well known, as his flirtations with neo-fascism through his political associate Jorge Verstrynge, an admirer of France's National Front.

The Pabloites' nationalist position in this debate is deeply rooted in their political DNA. They split with the International Committee of the Fourth International and Trotskyism in 1953 on the demoralized and reactionary grounds that one had to subordinate "all organisational considerations, of formal independence or otherwise, to real integration into the mass movement," i.e., those led by Stalinist and bourgeois-nationalist forces. According to

the Pabloites, these forces, not the working class led by the Fourth International, would lead the revolutionary struggle for centuries to come.

This anti-Trotskyist position was rapidly exposed, including within Spain itself. When the fascist regime created by Generalissimo Francisco Franco's victory in the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War collapsed amid rising strikes and workers struggles in the 1970s, the Stalinists sought to block a revolution and negotiate a transition to parliamentary rule and an amnesty for the Francoites. Based on their counterrevolutionary perspective, the Pabloites backed this collaboration between the Communist Party, the PSOE and the fascist right.

Forty years after the 1978 Transition from Francoite to parliamentary rule, Spanish and world capitalism are passing through the deepest political and economic crisis since the 1930s. In the face of the social disintegration that followed the 2008 Wall Street crash in Spain, the Stalinist and Pabloite elements came together to form Podemos in 2014. Theoretically rooted in a postmodernist rejection of both Marxism and the revolutionary role of the working class, they aimed to shore up the post-1978 order, as their support from Podemos for the PSOE government makes clear.

A year later, in January 2015, during the II Congress of Anticapitalistas, the Pabloites announced they were dissolving their party into Podemos because it was the only "electoral instrument for the working social majority, which aims to be the tool that allows building a government at the service of the people below."

The political crisis has rapidly outstripped the political manoeuvres and illusions of the petty-bourgeois founders of Podemos, however. Three years later, they are confessing that they are shocked by the bourgeoisie's turn to far-right politics and react by debating whether they themselves want to adopt xenophobic and nationalist policies.



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