

Spanish petty-bourgeois groups call on Podemos to install social-democratic government

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After Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) leader and acting prime minister Pedro Sánchez failed to get parliamentary confirmation as prime minister as talks with Podemos broke down, petty-bourgeois groups working in the periphery of Podemos are pushing for a deal with the PSOE. Dismayed at the breakdown of the talks, they call on Podemos find a stratagem to install a minority PSOE government in power before the September deadline for new elections.

The class content of these calls—issued by the Pabloite *Anticapitalistas* faction of Podemos, the Revolutionary Left group linked to the Committee for a Workers' International, and the Class Struggle group affiliated to the International Marxist Tendency—is clear. Amid mounting strikes and political opposition among workers internationally, with mass strikes in Portugal, “yellow vest” protests in France, and protests to bring down the Algerian military regime, they aim to prop up an anti-worker PSOE government.

This underscores the filthy role of these petty-bourgeois parties, based on affluent layers of the middle class rooted in the union bureaucracy and academia. Even as the PSOE increases military spending, imposes billions of euros in austerity, and provides fertile ground for the rise of the pro-Francoite Vox party by organizing a show trial of Catalan nationalists, these groupings are pressing to support the PSOE. They are thus backing a fascistic turn in Spanish politics, targeting the working class.

Together with the Stalinist-led United Left and the Valencian-nationalist *Compromís* parties, these groups all call for Podemos to back a “Portuguese-style” government.

In Portugal, Prime Minister António Costa’s minority Socialist Party (PS) government rules via a deal with the Podemos-linked Left Bloc, the Stalinist Communist Party

(PCP) and the Greens. These parties support Costa’s government and provide votes for his austerity budgets to pass, but do not join the PS government to try to avoid growing anger at the PS. The Left Bloc also opposes “yellow vests” and strikers, which its leader Francisco Louçã viciously denounced as “a far-right operation ... using social media to whip up aggressive politicization in far-right terms.”

The *Anticapitalistas*, the Revolutionary Left, and Class struggle all are offering to play the same role within Spain—that is, not formally joining the government to try to avoid being exposed by its fascistic policies, but supporting it nonetheless. This proposal is virtually indistinguishable from the propaganda of the PSOE itself. In a letter to PSOE members, Sánchez also recently endorsed calls for building a government on Costa’s “Portuguese model.”

The *Anticapitalistas* posted a statement titled “Change the orientation, Don’t repeat mistakes, Build the alternative!” In it they call on the Podemos leadership “to negotiate from the left a programmatic investiture agreement” with the PSOE, based on 20 demands “in exchange for allowing the Sánchez government to rule.”

Like all these petty-bourgeois groups, the *Anticapitalistas* argued that the population can rely on Podemos to press the PSOE government for progressive policies. Podemos, they claim, will move “into opposition, conditioning with their votes the legislative and governmental action.” They say Podemos could be “providing the government with financial means through a progressive fiscal reform that seriously increases taxes on high incomes and assets, as well as the profits of big companies and banks, while ignoring the impositions of Brussels on the fiscal deficit.”

Similarly, Revolutionary Left posted a statement

insisting that Podemos “should not block Sánchez forming his government, but this does not mean we should participate in the PSOE’s executive.” It proposes to “expose the real interests” defended by the PSOE by calling to repeal “all reactionary laws approved by the [right-wing Popular Party] PP,” reverse “all social cuts,” return bank bailout money, “drastic increase in public health and education in the next budgets,” and more.

Class Struggle posted a statement titled “Sánchez’s first investiture failed. And now, what?” It calls on Podemos to reject participation in a PSOE-led government, “while supporting every progressive measure Sánchez will have to implement to differentiate himself from the right, however slight.” Podemos’ “vote must prevent reaction represented by PP, C’s and Vox, allowing the PSOE to rule alone, the political force which is still the most voted by progressive layers in society.”

The claim that backing the PSOE allows Podemos to press for progressive policies is a fraud. The PSOE, like the French Socialist Party or the German Social Democrats, ruthlessly wages war and imposes billions of euros in austerity against the workers. Moreover, parties like Podemos are themselves parties of austerity and police-state militarism: the Greek ally of Podemos, the recently ousted Syriza (“Coalition of the Radical Left”) government, implemented vicious austerity, armed Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen and imprisoned tens of thousands of migrants in squalid camps.

These events expose the class gulf separating the International Committee of the Fourth International from the various petty-bourgeois parties orbiting Podemos. While the ICFI advances a socialist program to mobilize workers across Europe and internationally against all the reactionary bourgeois parties, these parties are desperately seeking to block the eruption of mass opposition by promoting the discredited PSOE.

The reactionary role of Podemos and its political satellites, and of the “Portuguese” strategy they are proposing, is well understood in the ruling establishment. In Portugal, the main financial daily *O Jornal Económico* noted that the Left Bloc and the PCP “support the Socialist government [but] now have to distance themselves from it in order to capitalise on all the discontent.”

The petty-bourgeois parties calling for a “Portuguese” solution are participating in a bitter debate in the ruling elite over how to ensure the affairs of Spanish capitalism continue to function despite mounting social anger and political opposition in the working class.

Podemos Organisation Secretary Pablo Echenique has opposed the Portuguese model, declaring that “we already tried it and it failed,” referring to the last Podemos-backed PSOE government: “The last time we tested the Portuguese route in Spain, the government lasted eight months, the main state budget failed, and early elections had to be called again.”

And the Spanish petty-bourgeois parties themselves explain that their call to back the PSOE from outside government is little more than a cynical ploy to avoid taking responsibility for the right-wing policies of the government they are supporting.

The *Anticapitalistas* argue against entering into the PSOE government, noting that “To enter a government led by the PSOE is to be tied hands and feet to a party that has shown that what it really does is to decaffeinate the desire for popular change. The PSOE is today one of the guarantors of the monarchical political regime built in 1978 and of the antisocial treaties of the European Union, both aspects that determine the strategic orientation of its governmental action.”

Revolutionary Left states that “Entering the Government of Pedro Sánchez implies paying a very high cost: [Podemos] will have to endorse their policies and become complicit in their decisions.” Class Struggle argues that Podemos must stand outside the government to avoid “all the weight of responsibility on Sánchez for the anti-social measures that Spanish capitalism will demand from the government.”

These parties’ analyses show that their calls to back a PSOE government implicate them in preparing anti-social, militarist and anti-democratic measures against workers in Spain and around the world.



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