

Spanish pseudo-lefts try to block opposition to Podemos-PSOE regime

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The government coalition agreement between Podemos and the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) is exposing an entire layer of petty-bourgeois groups in Podemos' political orbit. They are violently opposed to building a Trotskyist, that is to say Marxist and internationalist, party in the working class. Aware of growing social anger amid mass protests and strikes in Catalonia, across Europe and internationally, they are peddling illusions in factions of Podemos, even after it has agreed to govern with the PSOE on a right-wing program of austerity and police state repression.

This is the content of an appeal to the *Anticapitalistas* faction of Podemos issued by the so-called Revolutionary Workers Current (CRT), the Spanish affiliate of the Morenoite Socialist Workers Party (PTS) in Argentina. It is titled "Open letter to Anticapitalistas: Break with Podemos, let's call for a regroupment of the confrontational left outside the regime."

The *Anticapitalistas*, to whom the CRT addresses its appeal, are the Spanish affiliate of the French New Anticapitalist Party (NPA); it founded Podemos in 2014 alongside a group of Stalinist university professors and union bureaucrats.

Even as it promotes the *Anticapitalistas*, the CRT is well aware that they are a faction of a party pursuing a violently right-wing agenda, including PSOE pledges to the European Union (EU) of €9.6 billion in pension and social cuts.

Podemos is pledged to joining the PSOE which, the CRT writes, "leads a 'constitutionalist' and monarchist bloc against the Catalan democratic movement, amid harsh repression and with political prisoners. As if that were not enough, forecasts predict a global recession in coming months that will affect the weak recovery of the Spanish economy and intensify EU and IMF pressure for new budget cuts, labour counter-reforms and anti-popular measures, like those applied historically by all PSOE governments."

On foreign policy, the CRT admits, Podemos will be "responsible for all the imperialist policies, like when the King visits reactionary monarchies like the Saudi one, backing of the coup plots of [Juan] Guaidó and the

Venezuelan right, and the defence of interests of multinational companies that plunder natural resources in Latin America and Africa. They will also be co-responsible for the immigration policy that expels immigrants at the borders and keeps the IDCs [Immigration Detention Centres] open and the reactionary Aliens Act."

The CRT also knows that Podemos supports the PSOE's building of a police state and its repression in Catalonia. It predicts that "the future government will maintain the same crusade against the democratic Catalan movement," which means to "support repression," to "accept the infamous verdict against the [nine Catalan nationalist] leaders" condemned to a combined 100 years in prison, and to "deny the right of nations to self-determination."

In short, the CRT knows that Podemos is a reactionary state party that aims to provide, as the CRT puts it, "a 'progressive' cover to an imperialist state."

The CRT, however, is intervening to perpetrate a political fraud, promoting those forces that cover for an imperialist state as potential converts to a "confrontational left." It postures as an adviser to the *Anticapitalistas*, trying to hold them back before they betray themselves and persuade them to break with Podemos and return to their supposed revolutionary roots. The CRT warns, "The direct management of the Spanish State will transform Podemos."

Who does the CRT think it is kidding? The management of the Spanish capitalist state by Podemos will not "transform" Podemos, but merely reveal yet again what it is: a reactionary, pseudo-left party.

In 2015, the year after its foundation, Podemos applauded the election of its Greek ally, Syriza ("the Coalition of the Radical Left"), which imposed EU austerity measures, betraying its electoral promises to end austerity. Its general secretary, Pablo Iglesias, met with bankers and state officials in Madrid's five-star Ritz Hotel to reassure them about Podemos's policies. It recruited as a leading member the former Air Force general and chief of the Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez, who participated in neo-colonial wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

The *Anticapitalistas* now include high-ranking officials closely tied to the police apparatus, such as Cadiz Mayor José María González Santos and European parliamentarian Miguel Urbán. In Podemos-run municipalities across Spain, workers have already seen their policies first-hand: austerity, strike-breaking and attacks on migrants. This has led to a collapse in support for Podemos, which has lost hundreds of thousands of members and 2 million votes since the 2016 elections.

The CRT knows that explosive opposition will emerge from the left against a PSOE-Podemos government. Its inevitable attacks on workers will unfold amid an international resurgence of class struggle and political protest—from Bolivia and Chile to Lebanon and Iraq and beyond. In Spain, where there is broad opposition to the jailing of nine Catalan bourgeois nationalists as political prisoners for calling peaceful protests and a peaceful independence referendum, strike activity has risen to 17 million hours lost this year, up 75 percent from 2018.

The CRT's policy under these conditions is to prevent a political break to the left of Podemos, even as authoritarian PSOE-Podemos policies in Catalonia and the relentless anti-Catalan campaign in the Spanish media promote a rapid rise of the far-right, anti-Catalan Vox party. In Greece, Syriza directly formed a coalition government with the far-right Independent Greeks party. In Spain, even as Vox surges, the pseudo-left milieu is complicit in the strangling of working class opposition to Podemos and the PSOE, thus favouring the rise of Vox.

The CRT advances, as its alternative to the construction of an international, revolutionary movement of the working class, a coalition between the *Anticapitalistas* and the Catalan petty-bourgeois nationalist Candidatures of Popular Unity (CUP). Indeed, the CRT campaigned for a CUP vote in the last election. The CUP won two seats in parliament.

The CRT statement says: "We believe the CUP's policy of not providing any support to the coalition government... is a good starting point for a regroupment of an anti-capitalist left, independent of the political regime. The CRT calls to actively promote this perspective, especially when the CUP enters parliament."

In short, amid an ultra-reactionary offensive by the entire ruling elite, including Podemos, and the rise of the far-right Vox party, workers are to turn away from the international class struggle and place their hopes in a handful of deputies in Spain's 350-seat Congress.

This frankly absurd perspective is itself based on a falsification of the politics of the CUP. It is neither anti-capitalist nor independent of the state regime and speaks for the same social layer as Podemos. It voted austerity budgets in Catalonia in 2016 and 2017 and played a leading role in

state promoting the NATO intervention in Syria, on the pretext of helping Kurdish nationalist militias working with US Special Forces.

The CUP's central role is to divert social discontent among youth and divide the working class in Spain behind a bankrupt perspective of building a new capitalist state in Catalonia, within the capitalist European Union. On this basis, it makes no appeal to the overwhelming opposition in the Spanish working class, over 69 percent in a recent poll, to Madrid's repressive policy in Catalonia.

The CRT's proposal of an *Anticapitalistas*-CUP alliance backed by the CRT is, in fact, only a barely disguised repetition of the founding of Podemos itself—that is, a pseudo-left trap for left-wing and socialistic sentiment in the working class.

It is worth recalling the internal bulletin leaked in 2014 from the *Anticapitalistas* to Eldiario.org, analysing the founding of Podemos amid mass discontent with the Stalinist United Left (IU) party. This bulletin found that "the right shift of IU... is destined to prepare a 'left' government with the PSOE." It declared, "This opens spaces to the left that we must fill."

In response, the bulletin concluded that the *Anticapitalistas* should create a new party named Podemos, led by "a number of people with media coverage" to serve as its "public face." This would open "the option of connecting to sectors of the population dissatisfied with traditional leftist organizations." The public face chosen was Pablo Iglesias, now the general secretary of Podemos.

Now, after Podemos has been exposed as a tool of reactionary factions of the affluent middle class tied to the PSOE, the CRT is nonetheless turning back to this reactionary playbook. This is because, in the final analysis, the CRT represents the same social milieu and puts forwards the same perspective as the *Anticapitalistas*. Indeed, the French affiliates of the CRT function as a faction within the NPA, the French affiliate of the *Anticapitalistas*.

The formation of the PSOE-Podemos coalition is itself an urgent warning: It is critical to break with petty-bourgeois politics, including the CRT, and fight for a socialist and revolutionary perspective for the developing international struggles of the working class. This means building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in Spain and internationally.



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