Anticapitalistas prepare to leave Spain's Podemos-Socialist Party government

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Anticapitalistas, the faction of the ruling pseudo-left Podemos party in Spain linked to France's Pabloite New Anticapitalist Party (NPA), are threatening to leave the Spanish government.

According to an electronic vote of the Anticapitalistas leadership leaked last week, they will not stand candidates in the March 21 Third State Citizens Assembly of Podemos, the party's key leadership body. They could still technically submit candidates until February 17, however.

This maneuver by Anticapitalistas reeks of hypocrisy. They are trying to shield themselves from mounting anger among workers and layers of the middle class at the reactionary policies of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government, which is committed to austerity, militarism and police state policies. They are speaking of abandoning the government only a few days after a general strike in Spain's Basque Country to defend pensions and "yellow vest" protests by Spanish farmers.

Anticapitalistas European MP Miguel Urbán called his party's coalition with the Spanish Socialist Party "a social free market government of the PSOE with some leftist ministers in its midst." He then warned of "disaffection and frustration" provoked by the "neoliberal policies" of the government—that is, of his own party.

The proposed departure of Anticapitalistas from the PSOE-Podemos government is a political fraud. Even as they move to leave, Anticapitalistas are making clear they have no principled differences with the government and will work with it again on the basis of its right-wing policies. They are leaving not to oppose Podemos and the PSOE, but to provide the ruling parties with a narrow political cover against growing anger among workers and youth.

Anticapitalistas leader Teresa Rodríguez insisted yesterday in a joint video with Podemos General Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias that Anticapitalistas and Podemos will maintain close and friendly relations. While announcing that she would not seek the investiture of Podemos in the southern region of Andalusia, she stressed that she would remain an ally of Podemos.

Rodríguez said, "I believe that in politics as in life, there are ways of separating that are aggressive, violent and patriarchal, and then there are civilized, respectful, empathetic and even loving ways, which are the healthiest, which can be built and are possible in politics. That is the significance of the message we are sending today."

Pointing to "discrepancies" in Anticapitalistas over the government's strategy, she said: "Andalusia should be led by a team in harmony with what has been decided by the majority of the leadership and membership of Podemos." That is, Rodríguez wants her region to be led by a team in harmony with the PSOE-Podemos government. She added that she "wants to be getting it wrong by worrying about the government coalition," and wishes "sincerely all possible luck to Pablo and his team."

As he tweeted the video, Iglesias commented: "In politics as in life sometimes paths separate. Thank you to Teresa and your people for your loyalty. Thank you for doing this with maturity. This good-bye is just a 'see you soon.' From different spaces we will meet to defend social justice. Good luck!"

This was a summary of his remarks in the video with Rodríguez, where he praised her for giving an "example of how to do things right," repeating: "There is not good-bye, only see-you-soon."

The pro-PSOE daily *El País* also approved, writing that the departure of Anticapitalistas would strengthen the Stalinist Iglesias: "The conclusion shared by different Anti-capitalist leaders is that, with them outside of Podemos, the vision of Iglesias as the leader of the

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Spanish radical left would be softened. ‘Pablo would be the great beneficiary,’ an Anticapitalistas leader concluded, speaking to this newspaper. The most immediate consequence is that the moderate profile of Podemos would be reinforced.”

If Rodríguez is calling for a “loving” break with Podemos, this is because she shares the anti-worker orientation of the petty-bourgeois, pseudo-left operatives making up this party. Five years after its Greek ally Syriza (“the Coalition of the Radical Left”) betrayed its 2015 election promises and imposed billions of euros in austerity on the Greek people, Podemos has in turn become a byword for right-wing policies. The PSOE-Podemos government is pledged to impose €8 billion in social austerity measures in 2020, while defending previously passed labour laws that undermined working conditions.

The government has also continued its predecessors’ anti-migrant policies, supporting Morocco’s police terror on migrants to keep them from crossing the Mediterranean to Spain, while incarcerating migrants in detention centers or expelling them to their home countries.

It has continued the police state build-up in Spain, sending police to brutally attack strikes and farmers’ protests and arrest strikers. It passed a “Digital Security Law” that allows the state to shut down digital communications, internet infrastructure and apps at will, without a court order.

It has also worked to suppress notorious fascist torturer Antonio González Pacheco’s service record. Better known as “Billy El Niño” (Billy the Kid), Pacheco was one of the most feared torturers of General Francisco Franco’s 1939-1978 fascist dictatorship. Though still alive, Pacheco has never answered for his crimes.

Though it has a “loving” relationship to such reactionary policies, Anticapitalistas is considering leaving Podemos.

It fears the growing international upsurge of the working class, which is rebelling against obscene levels of social inequality produced by capitalism. In Spain, a general strike in the Basque region paralysed the region two weeks ago. It was carried out under the slogan “Jobs, pensions and decent lives,” and was followed by farmers’ protests. Internationally, strikes have erupted in the US and Mexican auto industries, against French President Emmanuel Macron’s pension cuts and against anti-Muslim laws in India.

Should the Anticapitalistas ultimately leave the government, they will work to gather petty-bourgeois organizations together to disorient and suppress working class opposition to Podemos. Other groups calling for a “re-groupment” of pseudo-left organizations like Anticapitalistas have already signaled their interest in an alliance with them.

The Corriente Revolucionaria de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras (Male and Female Workers' Revolutionary Current—CRT) has called for the Pabloites to join them in a new “anti-capitalist front.” Last November, it posted an open letter to Anticapitalistas stating: “If we fail to set up a leftist political alternative in the face of the inevitable failure of Podemos in a government that will not change anything, those who will reap discontent will be the right and the far-right.”

Anticapitalistas European MP Urbán made clear that Anticapitalistas could be interested in taking up the CRT’s offer. The goal would be to build an organization to disorient and break up working class actions against the Podemos government, which Anticapitalistas supports.

Urbán told EFE: "There has to be a social left in the streets and squares, and also a political left that does not enter [the government]. One that can escort the government when things are done well and criticize and pressure when things are done badly.” He said Anticapitalistas “are willing to undertake that task” of building that “alternative… with many people from the political and social left.”

The complicity of the Pabloites in the reactionary PSOE-Podemos government vindicates the International Committee of the Fourth International’s critique of their pseudo-left politics. The only way forward is to mobilize the working class, in Spain, across Europe and internationally, independently of and against pseudo-left groups like Podemos. This requires building a section of the ICFI in Spain to take up its traditions of uncompromising political struggle against the Stalinist and Pabloite tendencies making up Podemos.

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