

Anticapitalistas covers for Podemos' incarceration of Spanish rapper Pablo Hasél

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Spain's Anticapitalistas party, a petty-bourgeois Pabloite tendency that helped found the "Left Populist" Podemos party and left the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government last year, is seeking to suppress opposition to Podemos as mass youth protests erupt against the jailing of rapper Pablo Hasél.

The jailing of the 32-year old rapper by the PSOE-Podemos government for insulting the state and the Bourbon monarchy marks a milestone in the building of a police state. Hasél has now become the first musician imprisoned in Spain since the 1978 fall of the fascist regime set up by Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Hasél, who faces further trumped up charges, could be jailed for up to 20 years.

In this situation, Anticapitalistas is terrified that it may not be able to control growing social opposition to the government. It posted its main statement on Hasél's incarceration, entitled "Mobilising discontent," on the online newspaper Publico. Its authors, Anticapitalistas spokespeople Raul Camargo and Lorena Cabrerizo, paint a devastating picture of Podemos in power.

The protests, it states, "are spontaneous, but they reflect the consciousness of a layer of youth who know that things are not going well. Freedom in this country is constantly under threat, and exercising it sometimes comes at a cost. ... There is entirely legitimate dissatisfaction among the youth. High unemployment, a privileged, totally corrupt political class serving the interests of the economic elites, and the feeling that the future will be worse: this is the backdrop for the protests."

It warns that the opposition to Podemos is mounting on its left. "Basically, what we are seeing are the first throes of a social crisis that will be very deep and that will undoubtedly have important political repercussions. The bid by the progressive government [i.e., the PSOE and Podemos] to avoid any kind of change is translating into increasing disaffection among the people on the left."

However, Hasél's jailing is an exposure, not only of Podemos, but also of Anticapitalistas, which founded Podemos together with groups of Stalinist professors and army officers in 2014 and promoted it as a "radical democratic" party. In 2020, Podemos formed a coalition government with the PSOE, the Spanish bourgeoisie's preferred party of rule in the post-Franco era. It argued that this nationalist, pro-capitalist strategy would block the rise of the far right and pave the way to prosperity.

Instead, Podemos has increasingly adopted the agenda of the fascist Vox party. PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has even

hailed Vox for its "statesmanship," as the PSOE ruthlessly forced millions of workers and children back to work and back to school amid the pandemic, which has left over 800,000 dead in Europe, and nearly 100,000 in Spain.

The PSOE-Podemos government has escalated the persecution of migrants and downplayed far-right coup threats from sections of the military. It is now working to shower corporations and banks with €140 billion in European Union bailouts.

The government routinely sends police to smash strikes against "herd immunity" policies and to monitor working class opposition on social media. Nine Catalan nationalist political prisoners remain in jail, charged with organising protests in 2017 that were peaceful. Last week, anti-riot police used live pellet ammunition on anti-police violence protesters in Linares, Jaén, leaving two protesters injured and soaked in blood.

Anticapitalistas, however, tries to maintain the pretense that Podemos is a progressive force. It states: "Podemos tries to maintain a critical position on some issues (it is a credit to Podemos that, for now, they have not joined the criminalisation of the protests) but it lacks the social force to influence the future of the government. This contributes to their disengagement with the streets: being in the government under the command of the PSOE, as some of us have already warned, is not translating into achieving appreciable social improvements, however, they are losing credibility."

This is a lie. First, Podemos' "critical" position on certain issues, like posturing in favour of the protesters, is the cynical role it plays on behalf of the political establishment. It is an attempt to limit social opposition by dressing up the current government in "left" colours. This worn out tactic, however, is increasingly hard to deploy after Podemos has supported so many reactionary measures.

Last week, Podemos parliamentary spokesperson Pablo Echenique tweeted: "All my support to the young anti-fascists in the streets who are calling for justice and freedom of expression."

Echenique's empty posturing was contradicted by his fellow Podemos lawmaker, Communist Party of Spain (PCE) General Secretary Enrique Santiago, who defended the brutal police repression that led to hundreds of arrests and injuries. Santiago declared, "The obligation of the SSFB [State Security Forces and Bodies] is to prevent a small demonstration from ending up in chaos, which is then used by the right wing."

In fact, police are increasingly viewed with disdain by masses of

workers and youth, who rightly view them as Vox's auxiliary forces—attacking striking workers, migrants and youth, but treating affluent, far-right protesters opposed to lockdowns to stop the pandemic with kid gloves.

Second, the argument that Podemos lacks influence to make any change because they only have 35 lawmakers and four ministers in the government does not withstand scrutiny. It is Anticapitalistas' alibi for the reactionary policies of Podemos.

In reality, Podemos has enormous leverage inside the government. As the PSOE's coalition partner, Podemos could threaten to leave the government and thus bring the government down at any moment. It has studiously avoided any suggestion that it might employ such a policy, however.

Underlying the cowardice of Podemos are basic class interests. Whatever their tactical differences with the PSOE, Podemos articulates the interests of an upper middle class milieu of academics, union bureaucrats, army officers and affluent professionals. What they fear more than anything else is that mobilising opposition from the left of the PSOE could provoke a social explosion threatening the interests of the capitalist oligarchy they defend. As a result, they have neither called protests against Hasél's jailing nor threatened to leave the government.

Under certain conditions, of course, Podemos might eventually leave the government. Its deputy speaker of the Spanish parliament, Gloria Elizo, has been provided with a platform in the main media to criticize Podemos' participation in government. She recently gave interviews to the right-wing dailies *El Confidencial* and *El Español*, where she complained that "we have renounced being an alternative by entering into this government."

Elizo represents a faction close to the position of Anticapitalistas. However, Anticapitalistas' so-called alternative to Iglesias' line of entering government was always a fraud. It consisted in not formally joining the government, trying to avoid being exposed by its fascistic policies, but supporting it nonetheless in parliament to ensure the affairs of Spanish capitalism continue to function despite mounting social anger and political opposition in the working class. In the end, it was an attempt to not "lose credibility" in the eyes of the working class as quickly as would happen if Podemos joined the government.

Podemos' departure, however, would not seek to oppose the PSOE from the left but to suppress social opposition with the support of the union bureaucracies. This is precisely what Anticapitalistas has sought to do since it left the PSOE-Podemos government last year.

As the WSWs warned in June, Anticapitalistas did not leave the PSOE-Podemos government because it opposed Podemos' policies. Its statement even hailed the framework of the government, declaring: "Of course, we will support all the gains made within this framework and we will fight together against the extreme right." It added that "there is no doubt that we will find ourselves in many common struggles with the people of Podemos."

Analysing the statement, the WSWs warned that Anticapitalistas was "being sent out of Podemos to serve as a paid agent of the Spanish capitalist state, intervening on social media and in protests and strikes hostile to Podemos to spy on and strangle them."

Nine months later, this warning has been fully vindicated. Camargo and Cabrerizo are supporting the protests in order to block an independent movement of the working class and tie youth to the PSOE and Podemos. They state, "In short, we are facing an explosive situation. From the social and political left we need a strategy in the face of the new situation. ... What we urgently need is to turn these impulses from the streets into an initiative and build an agenda of our own, which prevents the extreme right from being structurally on the offensive. This involves avoiding the isolation of the protests, expanding them and adding more and more social sectors."

The question is posed: What revolutionary perspectives are necessary for the emerging movement of the working class and youth? As class struggles mount internationally amid the ruling elite's "herd immunity" policy during a pandemic which has already killed over 2.3 million people worldwide, a political leadership must be built in the working class that is irreconcilably opposed to pro-imperialist, petty-bourgeois groups like Anticapitalistas.

This also includes the politics of Hasél, a hodgepodge of Stalinism and Castroite guerrillaism. Hasél has defended Castroism, armed groups like ETA, Terra Lluire and the Red Brigades, and the Soviet bureaucracy, as well as the infamous assassin of Leon Trotsky, Ramón Mercader. The heirs of Stalinism in Spain, which played a treacherous role in suppressing the Spanish revolution in blood during the 1930s, are a fundamental part of the post-Francoite capitalist order. Hasél, it must be said, shares much of the outlook of forces in Podemos who have now condemned him to jail.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) defends Hasél's freedom of expression but not his anti-Trotskyist politics.

The reactionary record of Anticapitalistas and Podemos underscores that the decisive strategic question today is building the ICFI as the revolutionary leadership in the working class. This requires building sections of the ICFI in Spain and internationally, based on the colossal political experiences embodied in its history, to wage an uncompromising struggle against groups like Anticapitalistas.



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