

Spain's Morenoite Izquierda Diario downplays pandemic as PSOE-Podemos government lifts restrictions

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Two weeks after PSOE (Socialist Party)-Podemos government called to end Spain's state of alarm, the Morenoite Workers' Revolutionary Current (CRT) has shown itself to be utterly indifferent to the many lives that will be lost to COVID-19 as the ruling elite lifts social-distancing restrictions.

The state of alarm is the juridical mechanism allowing regional governments to impose coronavirus health measures such as lockdowns, curfews and mobility restrictions. Announcing the lifting of this measure on April 6, PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez declared: "I hope that it will not be necessary to continue the state of alarm and that the Interterritorial Health Council will continue responding ... We want May 9 to be the end, full stop, of the state of alarm."

While the state of alarm was in itself vastly insufficient to stem the contagion, Sánchez's announcement was a signal that the Spanish and European ruling class no longer tolerate any health measures which impinge on their profits. The lifting of this measure on May 9 will inevitably lead to a further escalation of infections and deaths in Spain, since the pandemic is far from under control.

Infection rates in Spain have risen steadily since at least the middle of March, with around 9,000 new cases reported every day in the last week. This compares to around 4,000 daily infections in the middle of last month.

On Monday, Spain announced a further 121 coronavirus deaths over the weekend and another 21,071 cases—one of the largest weekend infection counts since the end of February. The 14-day incidence also rose again to 230 cases per 100,000 inhabitants,

the highest since 24 February.

None of this, however, could be gleaned from the coverage of the ending of the state of alarm in the CRT's online publication, *Izquierda Diario*. In a 7 April article entitled "What changes will be brought by the end of the state of alarm which the government has set for May 9?", the CRT avoids the question of mass death and disease, failing to devote even a single sentence to the health crisis unleashed by the pandemic.

The millions infected, the over 100,000 dead and the tens of thousands more suffering from debilitating long-term symptoms in Spain alone do not merit a mention as far as the CRT are concerned. The explosion of cases and fatalities, the main "change" which will be brought about by the abandonment of any attempt to contain the virus from May 9, is likewise completely ignored.

According to official figures, more than 3.4 million people have so far been infected with the virus in Spain, and over 77,000 deaths have been recorded. The official death toll is a significant underestimate, as excess death totals indicate that more than 100,000 people have lost their lives in Spain as a result of the pandemic. Despite this social catastrophe, the CRT has consistently refused to call for scientifically grounded health restrictions, including a fully funded shelter-at-home policy for workers—the only measure proven capable of halting the contagion.

Its 7 April piece reads like an information bulletin for the Spanish government—explaining which measures regional governments will and won't be able to impose starting on May 9 and noting that theoretical bans on evictions and utility shut-offs will also be ended with the state of alarm.

"Therefore, May 9 could conclude the State of Alarm

stage and will bring about many changes in terms of health, mobility and employment,” the article declares. “But the most important, those which affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of families, will only see it on paper and in the press conferences of the ‘progressive’ ministers. The right to housing, to basic utilities and to a job, were not and will not be the priority of a government of the ’78 Regime.”

The CRT’s omission of any call for measures to safeguard the right to *life* of workers is not an accident. The Morenoites have consistently opposed social distancing measures and demonstrated their ambivalence to the suffering and death inflicted primarily on the working class as a result of the ruling elite’s criminal mismanagement of the pandemic.

In January, the CRT published a statement denouncing social distancing restrictions as “authoritarian and palliative” measures, declaring: “As if it were a tap, they [the PSOE-Podemos government] are limiting our liberties and movements at their will.”

A separate statement at the same time called for “10 emergency measures” to combat the pandemic, none of which included any call for a shelter-at-home policy or lockdown measures.

Further expounding on this policy in an April 18 international manifesto entitled “The Capitalist Disaster and the Struggle for an International of Socialist Revolution,” the CRT’s parent organisation—the misnamed Trotskyist Fraction-Fourth International—makes no call to shut down schools or non-essential workplaces, instead agitating against lockdowns.

Using the stalking horse of “curfews” to justify their opposition to lockdown policies, the manifesto stated: “We demand an end to militarization, states of emergency, and curfews, which are of no use to stop the pandemic.” This denunciation of any collective health measures as ineffective is reactionary nonsense which will cut across any serious attempt to bring the pandemic to an end.

The CRT’s anti-lockdown position makes them complicit in the reactionary and murderous policies of the PSOE-Podemos government. They are silent on the government’s criminal “herd immunity” strategy because they agree with it in all its fundamentals.

Their position is a reflection of the class interests which they defend. The CRT speaks for affluent layers

of the middle class and members of the union bureaucracy, whose incomes and lifestyles are dependent on the upward trajectory of the stock markets and the continued exploitation of the working class. These interests are incompatible with a policy of prioritising lives over profits. In this they are in full agreement with the PSOE-Podemos government, for whose policies they seek to provide “left” cover.

On Monday, Fernando Simón, director of the Centre for the Coordination of Health Alerts and Emergencies (CCAES), gave a self-congratulatory press conference in which he praised the policies of the PSOE-Podemos government and sought to downplay the risks posed by the rise in infections.

Presenting the forthcoming wave of death as being of an acceptable magnitude, Simón cynically declared that it is “likely” that the so-called fourth wave will only be a “little wave.”

“The evolution [of the virus’ curve] is good,” he continued. “We have to be satisfied at how we’ve been capable of responding to this increase that we’ve seen coming for weeks, but we can’t lower our guard.”

The key concern of the PSOE, Podemos and their pseudo-left satellites like the CRT is to keep profits flowing into the coffers of the financial elite, consequences be damned. Against this, the International Committee of the Fourth International has consistently fought for a fully funded programme of health and social measures to allow workers to shelter at home until the virus can be stopped. This requires a political break with all the representatives of the pseudo-left, as part of an independent struggle by workers and youth for socialism in Spain and internationally.



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