Spain's Anticapitalistas back anti-migrant press campaign targeting Morocco

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Spain's petty-bourgeois Anticapitalistas party is inciting pro-imperialist hysteria against Morocco. It is falling in line with the campaign unleashed by the liberal press against Morocco after Rabat opened its side of the border, allowing migrants to cross into Spain's enclave in northern Morocco, Ceuta, in makeshift boats and dinghies. An estimated 10,000 entered, many of them families or children.

The Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government responded by implementing the savage policy advocated for months by the fascist Vox party, militarising the border. It deployed the army, special forces and thousands of police to Ceuta, summarily rounding up and illegally deporting thousands of migrants, many of them children.

Last week, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez reacted furiously after a communiqué from Rabat declared it opened its side of the border to pressure Madrid to recognise Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony annexed by Rabat in 1975, as part of Morocco. Additional concerns of Morocco's monarchy no doubt included deflecting mass anger from official mismanagement of the pandemic and Israel's attack on Gaza. Rabat opened its border with Spain after mass protests on Israel's bloody bombing campaign targeting the Gaza Strip.

Sánchez focused only on his conflict with Morocco over Madrid's former colonial possession, saying last week that "they have used immigration, that is, the assault on the Spanish borders by more than 10,000 Moroccans in 48 hours, due to disagreements in foreign policy, this seems unacceptable." He claimed it was "inadmissible," describing Morocco's actions as akin to "attacking borders."

The PSOE-Podemos government's campaign against Morocco has the de facto support of the Anticapitalistas. This party, which left Podemos last year to better serve the government from the outside, aligned itself on the anti-immigrant campaign of the PSOE and Podemos. It seized on the entry of migrants to accuse Rabat of "blackmail" and "human rights violations" while peddling illusions that the PSOE-Podemos government defends democratic rights.

Anticapitalistas leader Teresa Rodríguez said: "What is happening in Ceuta is the result of externalizing the borders to countries where Human Rights are systematically violated, such as Morocco, in exchange for permanent blackmail." She proposed that "the Government should show courage" to "manage its own borders without depending on Morocco."

Rodríguez's "solution" is in fact what the PSOE-Podemos has done by deploying the army and police, and brutally expelling thousands of migrants. Madrid has also refused the support of Frontex in Brussels, stating they can manage the Ceuta crisis without the EU's anti-migrant task force.

In Brussels, European Member of Parliament (EMP) Miguel Urbán, who was elected in a Podemos slate but has remained as EMP even after his tendency broke with Podemos, intervened in a plenary session in the European Parliament. He denounced "The umpteenth exercise of blackmail by Morocco." He said externalising borders "gives unscrupulous dictatorships a blackmail weapon. If we want to end this blackmail and protect migrants' human rights, there is only one way: to dismantle the policies of Fortress Europe."

Urbán's claim that the EU can dismantle Fortress Europe to defend a more humane migrant policy is ludicrous. The entire ruling class in Europe is rapidly shifting to the right, aware that anger is rising among workers against social inequality and the criminal "herd immunity" policy it has pursued on the pandemic.

While Europe is in its deepest economic crisis since the 1930s, it has seen more than a million coronavirus deaths. On the other hand, its billionaires became €1 trillion richer in a year.

To defend this ill-gotten wealth, and with inequality at unsustainable levels, the ruling class is preparing for repression. In France and Spain, factions of the military are openly plotting coups and avowedly preparing for civil war against the working class. In Germany, all parties are pressing ahead with militarism and are implementing in practice the programme of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). The army, police and intelligence agencies are riddled with far-right terrorist networks.

The Pabloites are also agitating for Spain to more aggressively to intervene in Western Sahara, its former colony annexed by Morocco in 1975, to organise a referendum on self-determination. Anticapitalistas has doubled down on these calls since war erupted between Morocco and the Algerian-backed bourgeois-nationalist Polisario Front last November.

At that time, Anticapitalistas posted a neo-colonial statement calling for the re-establishment of Spanish rule over its former colony. It demanded Spain "assume its role as formally administering the territory and guarantee respect for the human, social and economic rights of the Saharawi people as a step prior to ensuring a just, peaceful, democratic and lasting solution to this conflict, which inevitably requires respect for the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people."

If Madrid adopted such a hawkish position, trying to physically seize its former colony now controlled by Morocco to organise an independence referendum, it could easily lead to war.

Spain's historical record in the region is brutal. During intermittent wars with Moroccan tribes between 1909 and 1927, Madrid's punitive "pacification" campaigns massacred civilians, bombed markets and settlements, and used incendiary bombs to set fire to defenceless villages and cultivated fields. Madrid also used rape and poison gas attacks as weapons of war targeting civilian populations.

These wars bred a generation of fascist military officers like General Francisco Franco who used similar methods against the working class at home—culminating in the July 1936 fascist coup, the Spanish Civil War and a four-decade Francoite regime in Spain, between 1939 and 1978.

The position of Anticapitalistas on Morocco reflects the longstanding support for imperialism of this petty-bourgeois, pro-capitalist party. It endorsed the US-NATO war against oil-rich Libya in 2011. In the name of "democracy, social justice, and the improvement of the situation of women," two leaders of Anticapitalistas, Esther Vivas and Josep Maria Antentas, condemned the "anti-imperialism of some sectors of the left" and advocated "the political and economic international isolation of the [Libyan] regime and the unconditional supply of weapons to the rebels."

The European powers and the US then employed precisely this strategy to wage a war for regime change in Libya. It cost over 30,000 deaths, leaving Libya in ruins. The country still is mired in a civil war between competing Islamist factions that NATO had supported, which has killed thousands and displaced over 100,000 people.

The goals of Spain's participation in the Libyan war, defended by Anticapitalistas, are not hard to see. Last week, a decade after Anticapitalistas backed the Libyan war, Sánchez travelled to Libya with several businessmen, including Josu Jon Imaz, the head of Spain's major oil company, Repsol. Libya is among the 10 countries with the most oil reserves in the world, and the daily *El País*, commented on Sánchez's trip by citing anonymous state officials who said: "This country is sitting on a treasure."

Defending democratic rights in northern Africa, including on the Moroccan-Sahrawi conflict, requires first of all rejecting the vicious imperialist campaign against migrants. Madrid's attempts to endow its policy of plunder with a "democratic" veneer by citing the Moroccan monarchy's crimes are saturated with imperialist hypocrisy. The defence of democratic and social rights cannot be left to either the blood-soaked representatives of the former colonial powers, or any of the bourgeois-nationalist factions, but requires the international unification of the working class in a revolutionary, socialist struggle against imperialism.