

# Podemos covers up neo-fascist circles in Spanish army

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The Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos party government is actively covering up for far-right circles in the Spanish army.

In July, online newspaper *La Marea* requested information from the Ministry of Defence on what investigations were carried out and what sanctions were imposed on active-duty officers over public displays of support for fascism by Spanish military officers while on duty.

In December 2020, *La Marea* had released a video showing soldiers of the Parachute Brigade (BRIPAC), based in Madrid's Paracuellos del Jarama barracks, singing and dancing to "Primavera" (Spring) by the neo-Nazi rock band Estirpe Imperial and raising their arms in a fascist salute. The song hails Spain's Blue Division, a 45,000-strong infantry division of volunteers sent by Spanish fascist dictator General Francisco Franco during World War II to support Nazi Germany's war of extermination against the Soviet Union. This war left nearly 27 million Soviet dead.

This took place on December 8, 2019, during the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Three of those soldiers, although many more were involved, were allegedly punished for a minor offence.

Another video, taken in 2017 but only reported the day after *La Marea* posted the BRIPAC video, showed Spanish army Alpine soldiers singing verses of at least two Estirpe Imperial songs. While marching on Atocha street in Madrid, one soldier sang these verses which the rest repeated. They are heard exalting the "Race of conquistadores, of noble and loyal people, we prefer death to traitors."

The videos emerged amid a political crisis provoked by letters to King Felipe VI by retired top military officers, denouncing the PSOE-Podemos government as a "social-communist government," accusing it of

undermining "national unity," and assuring the king of their "deep loyalty." The signatories included officers whose WhatsApp chats proclaimed loyalty to Franco, boasted of being "good fascists," and called for the murder of "26 million" left-wing voters and their families to "extirpate the cancer." These officers received the public support of the far-right Vox party.

These videos, along with texts from a WhatsApp group of 121 active-duty officers defending the signatories of these letters, exposed the lie that Spain's integration into NATO and in the US-led wars in the Middle East modernised and democratised the Spanish army. They expose the degraded atmosphere prevailing in NATO military forces across Europe. Only a few months later, 23 retired French generals, supported by over 7,000 officers, wrote in the neo-fascist magazine *Current Values* advocating a coup in France.

Above all, they exposed the false claims of then-Podemos General Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias, who sought to downplay and cover up fascist sentiments in the officer corps. After the retired officers' WhatsApp chats were revealed, Iglesias gave a prime-time television speech dismissing the chats as irrelevant. "What these gentlemen say, at their age and already retired, in a chat with a few too many drinks, does not pose any threat."

Once *La Marea* released its videos, exposing Iglesias's lies, Podemos tried to cover its tracks by asking the Ministry of Defence to investigate its troops. When PSOE-Podemos Minister of Defence (MoD) Margarita Robles vitriolically denounced the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) for calling for an investigation, Podemos parliament spokesperson Jaume Asens defended the PNV. Asens asked Robles to stop "with apologies for Nazism in the army," claiming he was "alarmed" by neo-fascist "infiltration" of the army.

The MoD's refusal last week to disclose the results of these official investigations exposes the fraud of Podemos appeals for the military to investigate its own fascist sympathies.

It is likely either that no penalties were imposed or that penalties were so light that their publication would embarrass the PSOE-Podemos government. In either case, this would expose their collusion with the pro-fascist forces in the army.

Podemos never intended to call for an investigation of pro-fascist sentiment in the army. It aims to dampen the deep and historically rooted anti-fascist sentiments in the working class in Spain and across Europe, concerned that this could intersect with rising opposition to its austerity agenda, bank bailouts and its policies on the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in over 100,000 excess deaths. Such a movement in the working class, Podemos fears, can rapidly develop against its own government and capitalism.

The role of Podemos vindicates warnings made by the WSWS starting at the end of last year, amid the Spanish army's coup threats and former US President Donald Trump's coup plotting which culminated in a fascist coup attempt to overrun the Capitol in Washington. Workers and youth cannot place any confidence in the Biden administration holding the conspirators to account or defending democracy. In Spain, they cannot trust the "left populist" Podemos party to defend democracy against the preparation of a far-right coup.

In fact, Podemos is emerging as a political tool of the conspiracy, dedicated to suppressing social opposition to the fascist threat. A party of the affluent middle class, familiar with the history of the Spanish Civil War, it knows that a working-class movement against a fascist coup would also enter into opposition against its own government. It is therefore desperately trying to hide the stench of far-right plots in the army.

Significantly, the PSOE-Podemos government invoked the Official Secrets Law to block any disclosure to *La Marea*. This law was passed in 1968 during the Franco dictatorship and has remained in force ever since. It has been used by PSOE and PP-led governments, and now the PSOE-Podemos government, to avoid exposures of the state apparatus—including the role of the PSOE and former

King Juan Carlos in the February 23, 1981 coup attempt; state terror against the Basque-nationalist armed group ETA; and the corrupt finances of Spain's Bourbon monarchy.

This exposes all of Podemos' pretences to criticise the 1978 Transition from Francoite rule to a parliamentary regime for not "fulfilling" the Spanish people's democratic and social aspirations. The truth is that the Transition was never about bringing about democracy. The political forebearers of Podemos in the Stalinist Communist Party of Spain (PCE) strangled a developing revolutionary crisis, in exchange for getting positions in the post-Franco capitalist regime.

This filthy compromise, embodied in the 1978 Constitution of the PSOE, PCE and the Francoites and the 1977 Amnesty Law that "forgave" the crimes of fascism, allowed the Francoite ruling class to keep its privileges and wealth. The state apparatus—including the judiciary, the army and the police—remained stacked with fascists.

It would be a terrible political error to underestimate how fragile the limited democratic rights granted under the Transition are. Barely 40 years later, Podemos is using fascist legislation to cover for far-right circles in the army. The danger of a fascist coup against mounting working-class anger over social inequality, austerity and "herd immunity" policies is very real.

These events vindicate the International Committee of the Fourth International's (ICFI) analysis of the reactionary role of pseudo-left middle class parties like Podemos. These parties have completed their integration into the military machine. A critical task in the struggle against the pandemic and the danger of dictatorship is building a section of the ICFI in Spain and internationally, to lead the struggle for a conscious and irrevocable political break with pseudo-left groups like Podemos.



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