

Spain's PSOE-Podemos government backs NATO war threats against Russia

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Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government is provoking mounting opposition as it sends warships and fighter jets to join NATO's threats against Russia in Eastern Europe.

Last week, Minister of Defence Margarita Robles announced Madrid was sending one of the most modern frigates in the Spanish navy, the *Blas de Lezo*, to NATO's permanent fleet, to operate in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea against Russia. Spain will also send the BAM Meteor to join the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2, which it will lead for six months. The group's role is to provide NATO with immediate operational response capability against Moscow.

Robles said that she had offered NATO to send fighter jets to Bulgaria, beyond the 360 soldiers already deployed in Lithuania and six Eurofighter jets in Romania. In addition, she recalled that for six years Spain has had more than 300 soldiers in Latvia. She threatened Moscow, "Russia cannot tell any country what it can do, and NATO will defend any country that Russia wants to enter."

The deployment of Spanish military troops and the warmongering threats of the PSOE-Podemos government are provoking growing opposition among workers and youth. Over the past several days, the hashtag #NoALaGuerra (No to war) has been trending on Twitter.

"No to war" was the main slogan throughout 2002 and 2003 on the eve of the Iraq war when America, Britain and Spain, led by the right-wing Popular Party (PP), all pushed for an invasion that devastated Iraqi society and led to the deaths of one million Iraqis.

Jose Antonio Pérez tweeted: "Today Spain has decided to contribute ships, planes and troops because it is intolerable that Russia has soldiers on its territory next to the border with Ukraine. The US has had bases in Spain and in half of Europe for more than 50 years and nobody

says anything."

Helena, a public health worker tweeted: "This Russian thing reminds me 'a bit' of Iraq. They repeated ad nauseam that they had no weapons. The trio of the Azores [former US President George W. Bush, UK's Tony Blair and Spain's José María Aznar, who sent an ultimatum to Iraq in 2003 from Azores Islands] insisted on yes. War. Russia is repeating ad nauseam that IT IS NOT GOING TO INVADE UKRAINE. NATO insists that yes... this is going to end very badly."

Laura tweeted: "Today, thinking about the possible participation of Spain in a war, I was assailed by the anguish of thinking that they would begin to recruit every man over 18 years of age. I thought of my son, with his whole life ahead of him. I imagined how I would try to hide him. And this has happened and continues to happen."

Another user, Anibal, raised an article headlined, "Spain positions itself and offers its jets to Bulgaria amid the Russian threat," saying, "Partisan headline: the threats come not Russia, who is asking for security guarantees, but the [US] and the EU sending weapons to Ukraine and trying to corner Russia by joining NATO. The PP got us into a war and the PSOE wants to get us into in another."

Hector wrote: "Between NATO and Russia, they have more than 12,000 nuclear weapons. If there is war, we all lose."

Another user, Josep, recalled the mass protests involving millions throughout the world against the Iraq invasion 20 years ago: "Once again a chill is running through my body, almost twenty years later, 'No to war!' is back. I shouted this with all my might—it was useless. Mass mobilizations around the planet were of no avail."

This is an exposure of the bankruptcy of the Podemos party. Twenty years ago, the political layer from which it emerged—the Stalinist-led United Left movement, trade unions and petty-bourgeois activists—subordinated the

mass movement against the Iraq war to the PSOE. The PSOE then joined NATO wars in Afghanistan and Libya while sending troops to Lebanon and off the Somali coast. Now joined by Podemos in government, it is leading Spain's participation in NATO war threats against Russia.

Aware of growing opposition in the working class, Podemos is cynically posturing as a critic of the militarist actions undertaken by the government of which it is a part. To cover its alignment with the NATO war drive, it advances calls for the EU to develop its own foreign policy, claiming it is too subordinated to the US-led NATO alliance.

Last week, Podemos released a statement "rejecting" the deployment of Spanish troops to Eastern Europe. Podemos advocated "détente" and "strategic autonomy" to defend Europe's own interests, claiming that the extension of NATO towards Ukraine and Georgia "is exclusively due to US interests and puts peace at risk." The Minister of Equality, Podemos member Irene Montero, stated the following day that Spain is "the country of no to war" and called for "dialogue and diplomacy."

On Saturday, former Podemos leader and Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias stated at a campaign rally that Europe does not have "the slightest interest" in a military confrontation on European soil with a country that has nuclear weapons. He added that NATO is "a military alliance to protect the interests of the United States."

Podemos' statements are empty posturing. The deployment of the frigate *Blas de Lezo* was approved in a government meeting on December 21. Podemos' ministers did not raise any opposition. The frigate's deployment has simply been advanced three weeks from the time it was expected to be deployed.

Podemos is not an anti-war party. Founded in 2014, boasting it had entered Spanish politics to "democratise" the post-Franco regime and re-distribute wealth towards the poorest, Podemos has instead channelled growing social opposition to capitalism back into the PSOE, the ruling class's main party of government since the fascist Francoite regime fell in 1978. The PSOE has a decades-long record as a party of imperialist war and militarism.

Before entering power with the PSOE, Podemos recruited leading members of the army, including former Air Force General and Chief of the Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez, the man who led the Spanish army's participation in the US-led neo-colonial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and who played a major role in the

2011 NATO war on Libya. Rodríguez is now a leading member of Podemos.

Once in power, Podemos has aligned itself ever more closely with NATO wars in the Middle East in Afghanistan and Libya, pledged to keep the four US military bases in Spain, and supported the increase of Spain's weapons sales to a record €22.5 billion, including Saudi Arabia in its bloody war against Yemen. Last October, it participated in the militarist-chauvinist Day of Hispanicity on October 12. It has also voted in favour of the latest military budget, which has increased 9.4 percent last year, beating its earlier record rise from €19.7 billion in 2020 to €21.6 billion in 2021.

Podemos' defence of European "strategic autonomy" is not an anti-imperialist position. Rather, speaking for factions of the European ruling class, its support means mass militarisation of Germany, France and other European states to wage wars in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe independently from the US. Internally, this can only be accompanied with the gutting of public expenditure in health care, education and social spending.

There is deep, historically rooted opposition in the working class in Spain and internationally to militarism and nationalism. However, the lessons of the anti-war protests in 2002-2003 must be assimilated. Middle-class groups like Podemos are not opposed to militarism, and are neither willing nor able to mobilize the vast opposition against the current war drive. These forces aim to subordinate, isolate and finally suppress the mass anti-war sentiment.

Only a united socialist offensive by the international working class can prevent the ruling class from plunging the planet into the abyss. The only way for workers and youth to oppose the drive towards militarism, war and repression is to build Trotskyist parties, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), in opposition to the pseudo-left parties like Podemos.



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