

Spain's pseudo-left covers for Podemos as it threatens Russia with war

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The Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government's support for NATO threats against Russia and its sending of warships to the Black Sea is exposing an entire layer of petty-bourgeois groups in Podemos' political orbit.

As thousands die every day of COVID-19 in overwhelmed hospitals across America and Europe, NATO is preparing war with Russia. US officials have declared this will likely be the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II. Trying to strangle opposition in the working class to the looming danger of catastrophe, these organizations are desperately trying to tie workers and youth to the pro-war Podemos party.

War can only be stopped by the international political mobilization of the working class. This requires conscious opposition to groups like the so-called Revolutionary Workers Current (CRT), the Spanish affiliate of Argentina's Morenoite Socialist Workers Party (PTS), or the Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left) group, formerly affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI).

In a statement on its online publication, *Izquierda Diario*, titled "Against the imperialist offensive in the Black Sea Withdrawal of all Spanish and NATO troops!" the CRT absurdly declares:

It seems the leaders of Podemos did not realise that they are part of a NATO government until the military vessels were sent to the Black Sea. When Defence Minister Margarita Robles announced the deployment in the coming days, [Podemos] came out to express its opposition to such a decision. However, the deployment of Spanish maritime and air troops in the Black Sea was already approved in the Council of Ministers on December 21. At that time, with the unanimous support of all the parties in government, including Podemos and the PCE [Communist Party of Spain].

It later claims that growing social opposition, reflected in the NoToWar hashtag which trended for days in Spain, "makes it difficult for Podemos and the PCE to sustain their current imposture. But it is not impossible for them to do so, as they have been doing since they entered the government."

This amounts to little more than speculating as to whether Podemos will be able to lull workers to sleep as to the imminent

danger of war. The "imposture" of Podemos' attempts to market itself as a less militarist party than its rivals in the Spanish ruling establishment has in fact been comprehensively exposed. It is dispatching warships to the Black Sea and troops and fighter jets to Bulgaria.

Podemos leader, deputy prime minister and labour minister Yolanda Díaz made her party's position unmistakably clear last week. Coming out to defend the government, she said, "the government has one voice, and our position is clear," adding: "You will never find me dividing anyone." The next day she reiterated: "The government has one voice and that is the one of Pedro Sánchez."

Podemos Minister of Social Rights Ione Belarra also came out to defend the war drive. While sending a 16-point document in defence of "peace" in Ukraine, defending the "military neutrality of Ukraine," she hastened to point out in a TVE interview that Podemos' differences with the PSOE were just "small nuances." She also praised the "good role" played by Minister of Foreign Affairs José Manuel Albares, who recently travelled to Kiev to threaten Russia with "sanctions that will be implemented very quickly in the event of military aggression against Ukraine."

The Morenoite CRT are just the most brazen of a number of parties that present Podemos as anti-war, even as it sends warships, fighter jets and troops to Eastern Europe.

Revolutionary Left's statement declared that the sending of warships was "Quite an unsurprising statement of intent on the PSOE's part, but disappointing in the case of UP." It concluded its statement by explaining that if only Podemos changed its rhetoric, it could be in a better position to intervene in the working class to block it from mobilising against the war. It wrote:

The criticism of the PSOE by Pablo Iglesias and other leaders of Podemos have led them to sign a manifesto which points out the responsibility of the US and NATO in this dangerous military escalation. But it is not enough to sign a manifesto ... What we need is real opposition in the streets, organized against NATO, US and EU militarism. An opposition that cannot be carried out sitting in a government that participates in the warmongering threat itself.

This amounts to nothing more than peddling dangerous illusions that Podemos will oppose war, or spontaneously succumb to mass popular opposition to war.

These forces are not only peddling a false line about Podemos' support for war or the possibility of workers to "pressure" it to the left. They are seeking to lull the working class to sleep, as the danger of global nuclear war and the need to organize working class opposition to it is posed as the decisive issue on the order of the day.

They aim instead to maintain the straitjacket of Podemos over the working class, even as it prioritises profits over lives amid the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed over 122,000 Spaniards, showers large companies and banks with billions of euros from EU bailout funds, and implements social austerity.

The pro-imperialist role of these tendencies flows from the material interests of the layers of the middle class that they represent, and their historical opposition to a Trotskyist program. When the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) split from the Pabloite revisionist International Secretariat (IS) in 1953, CWI leader Ted Grant found a home in the IS. The Morenoite tendency led by Nahuel Moreno initially supported the ICFI, but later sought an unprincipled reunification with the Pabloites in 1963.

Their hostility to the ICFI was based upon claims that the road to socialism proceeded not through the building of the Fourth International, but through pressuring existing Stalinist, social democratic and bourgeois nationalist movements. These forces, they claimed, could become "natural Marxists" under the pressure of objective events, bypassing the need to develop and educate Marxist cadre as the leadership of the working class.

Today, the CRT's *Izquierda Diario* holds out the hope that the Stalinist and Pabloite tendencies that founded Podemos will take up the historical anti-militarist positions of the Spanish workers. It writes:

[T]he historic demand of the left for the withdrawal of the Spanish State from NATO and the closure of all its military bases on the peninsula—another one of the issues that the "left" [Podemos] renounced today ... —we must retake these and fight ... It is time for the left that maintains independent positions from the government, together with the trade unions and social movements, to call for mobilisations for these elementary demands to put a stop to the current warmongering escalation and retake the anti-imperialist and internationalist banners. Those flags so forgotten and trampled by those representatives of the "institutional left" who decided to become NATO ministers.

What the CRT is proposing here is not an anti-war movement in the working class, but a political manoeuvre controlled by the government. The CRT calls for an alliance with the union bureaucracy. However, these bureaucracies are direct agencies of the PSOE-Podemos government: the General Union of Labour

(UGT) is affiliated to the PSOE, and the Workers Commissions (CCOO) union to the PCE and Podemos. They will not lead, but strangle a movement against the urgent danger of war in Europe, including nuclear war.

This continues the reactionary role played by Pabloism and Morenoism for decades to cover up the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism.

During the Spanish Civil War launched by General Francisco Franco's fascist coup, the Stalinists crushed the workers uprising in Barcelona in 1937 in blood. After Franco's victory and after World War II, when Spain was ruled by a fascist dictatorship in the 1950s, the PCE called for a "National Reconciliation" with Spanish capitalism, based on establishing a capitalist parliamentary regime. It called for "peaceful coexistence" and "neutrality" between Spanish imperialism and the Soviet Union.

In 1976, as the PCE suppressed the largest strike wave since the 1930s against the Francoite regime, PCE General Secretary Santiago Carrillo said he was against "all foreign bases, both American ones in capitalist countries and Russian ones in socialist countries." For now, he added, the PCE "would accept American bases in Spain." This was the basis of the PCE's alliance with the PSOE amid the fall of the Francoite regime and the Transition to capitalist parliamentary rule in 1978.

Podemos continues these rotten traditions. Before entering government with the PSOE, Podemos had already called for Spain to remain within NATO and defended selling warships to Saudi Arabia so that its arms industry could profit from the bloodbath in the Middle East. It recruited former Chief of the Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez, 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.

Once in power, Podemos aligned itself ever more closely with NATO wars in Afghanistan and Libya, kept the four US military bases in Spain, and supported the increase of Spain's weapons sales to a record €22.5 billion, including to the bloody Saudi war against Yemen. It voted for the latest military budget, which rose 9.4 percent last year, beating its earlier record rise from €19.7 billion in 2020 to €21.6 billion in 2021.

Thus, Podemos leader and former Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias could cynically boast to Italy's *Corriere della Sera* in 2020: "Not even the leader of the largest communist party in the West, Enrico Berlinguer, had managed to get where I have: a Marxist in a government of NATO."

The danger of war can only be opposed by building an anti-war movement in the working class that is irreconcilably opposed to Stalinism and all its allies and apologists. This requires a political struggle based on the history and international program of the ICFI, aiming to build sections of the ICFI in Spain and internationally as the political leadership of the working class.



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