Podemos plans to join NATO summit in Madrid against Russia, China

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The plans of Spain's ruling Podemos party to participate in the June 28-30 NATO summit in Madrid irrefutably expose this reactionary pseudo-left party of Spanish imperialism.

In Madrid, this world's largest military organization—responsible for the deaths of millions and the devastation of countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, and now waging war against Russia in Ukraine—will lay out plans for war with Russia and China. Japan, a non-NATO member state at the centre of Washington's plans against China in the Asia-Pacific, will also attend. At the conference, Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government is to announce a doubling of its military budget to €24 billion, the largest military spending increase in Spain's history.

The PSOE-Podemos government intends to use the summit to call for a military escalation targeting Africa, the source of much Spain's oil and gas. Already at the Davos summit, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez declared: "For Spain it is very important that the NATO summit in Madrid sends a strong message about its southern flank. We have to deal with the security challenge on the eastern flank, but also the security concerns on the southern flank."

The middle class operatives who run Podemos are now trying to square the circle, trying to present it as both a party of the left and of opposition to NATO, and of support for NATO's war. At the same time, they are spending tens of millions of euros to deploy 25,000 police officers to downtown Madrid, which is to be turned into a fortress to insulate NATO delegates from social protest.

Last week, Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz, the likely candidate of Podemos in next year's general elections, skipped the conference on the 40th anniversary of Spain's entry into NATO. At the conference, Sánchez reaffirmed Spain's loyalty to NATO and discussed military spending increases to 300 army officials, ambassadors, big businessmen and politicians. Díaz claimed she missed the conference due to a medical appointment.

Soon after, Podemos co-spokesperson Javier Sánchez Serna stated: "No Podemos minister has gone to that event today, because we are in defence of peace and we defend a conception of security that is not only based on military means, but comprehensive, which also involves providing social rights to all European societies."

Díaz responded by immediately contradicting Serna, however, saying she has not ruled out attending the NATO summit, and that she will decide when the "agenda" is known.

Podemos general secretary and Minister for Social Rights Ione Belarra then intervened, stating: "I'm not going to attend, but that seems the least important issue to me. What matters most is whether we are going to bow as a country to external impositions that do not correspond to the interests of the people of our country or whether we are going to be able to prioritise social spending, which is what the people of our country need, instead of an increase in military spending."

This was a cynical anti-American appeal, designed to cover up the fact that not only Washington, but also the PSOE-Podemos government is waging war on Russia in Ukraine. It has sent over 800 troops to Eastern Europe, together with a detachment of Eurofighter jets and three warships to patrol the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea; supported crippling economic sanctions against Russia; and sent hundreds of millions of euros in weaponry to Ukrainian forces. This includes weapons sent by the PSOE-Podemos government now being used by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion.

Madrid is now reportedly finalising plans to deliver Shorad Aspide anti-aircraft missiles and Leopard combat tanks, and to train Ukrainian troops on the use of these tanks in Latvia or Spain. Yesterday, Spain's Ministry of Defence requested a €3 billion loan for its budget to meet Spain's commitments at the NATO summit.

After Belarra, Podemos parliamentary spokesperson Jaume Asens, intervened to stress that Podemos could participate in the NATO summit. He told Spain's public television TVE: "Our critical position [on NATO] is not incompatible with

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institutional attendance at these events."

Asens claimed that a "critical attitude at a given moment can be compatible with an institutional representation. We are very critical of the monarchy," he added, though this does not prevent Podemos from serving in Spanish King Felipe VI's government.

It is apparent that the empty criticisms Podemos makes of monarchy and war are only political cover for their slavish support for capitalism and imperialist war. What proves that this is not a tactical error or passing mistake is that an entire international layer of similar parties of the affluent middle class, rooted in postmodernist academia and the trade union bureaucracies, are all rushing to support war with Russia, a major nuclear-armed power.

In the US, the Democratic Socialists of America's (DSA) four elected legislators all voted for Washington's $40 billion arms package to fight Russia. At a recent panel, DSA officials claimed that "war creates the possibility for a push of socialist ideas in Ukraine." The German Green Party is part of a coalition government carrying out the €100 billion rearmament of German imperialism. Pabloite and Morenoite groups like the International Socialist League are urging the imperialist powers to send more weapons to neo-Nazi Ukrainian militias.

In the case of Podemos, its support for imperialist war is directly bound up with its rejection of Trotskyism and embrace of the traditions of Stalinism. After the fall in 1978 of the fascist regime that emerged from General Francisco Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1938, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) backed the emerging capitalist parliamentary regime against working class protests, based on the PCE's explicit support for NATO.

The first general secretary of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, met in 2012 with the PCE's general secretary during the 1970s, Santiago Carrillo—who had played a leading role in murdering Trotskyists and left-wing figures during the Civil War—and hailed Carrillo.

To those in the political establishment who knew the history of the PCE, this was an unmistakable statement of the support of Podemos for NATO and its bloody opposition to revolution. Indeed, Carrillo stressed that the PCE would back Spain's participation in NATO. In August 1976, the *New York Times*covered a news conference by Carrillo announcing the programme of the then recently legalised PCE, and wrote:

"Referring to American military bases in Spain, Mr. Carrillo asserted that the Spanish party is against 'all foreign bases, both American ones in capitalist countries and Russian ones in socialist countries.' His party, he said, supports a policy of elimination of military blocs. But for now, he said, the Spanish Communist Party would accept the American bases in Spain."

Podemos was founded in 2014 by Stalinist professors around Iglesias in alliance with Pabloite *Anticapitalistas*—the descendants of the forces led by Michel Pablo who in 1953 rejected Trotskyism and split with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), arguing that Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism would offer revolutionary leadership to the working class. It supported the NATO wars in both Libya and in Syria. Podemos recruited Chief of the Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez, who led Spanish involvement in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, to make this clear.

In 2012, after Podemos formed a government in alliance with the big-business Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), then-Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias cynically boasted to Italy's *Corriere della Sera*: "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 very occasional claims of Podemos to be Marxist are monumental political lies. Its record in government shows that it is a tool of the banks and big business. It implemented trillion-euro EU bank and corporate bailouts, social austerity, and showered the Spanish army and industry with billions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it consistently prioritised profits over lives, leading to over 162,000 excess deaths in the country during the pandemic, according to *The Lancet*.

In government with the PSOE, Podemos has covered for threats by Spanish officers to launch a coup, while mobilizing tens of thousands riot police to crack down on striking truckers and metal workers.

As the PSOE-Podemos government joins NATO's war against Russia and war threats against China, the decisive issue is building an international anti-war movement in the working class. It can only be built in irreconcilable struggle against the pseudo-left parties like Podemos. The example of Spain, whose principal trade unions are affiliated either to Podemos or to the PSOE, underscores a further point: it can only be built in a break with national trade union bureaucracies, and building the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

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