

Podemos backs Madrid's commitment to NATO war on Russia

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Podemos' aggressive support for NATO's war in Ukraine against Russia, amid mounting working class anger at inflation and war, exposes it as a reactionary petty-bourgeois militarist party. Fearing rising opposition to its left, Podemos is mounting one anti-war charade after another, while continuing to support Spain's imperialist war efforts in Eastern Europe against Russia.

Podemos' latest charade was mounted in last week's parliamentary debate on Sweden and Finland's NATO membership. NATO countries signed the two countries' accession protocol in July, but they must be ratified by NATO member states' parliaments before they can be protected by Article 5's defence clause.

Spain's parliament approved the accession with 290 votes in favour, 11 votes against and 47 abstentions. The ruling Socialist Party (PSOE), the right-wing Popular Party, the far-right Vox party, and the Catalan nationalist PdeCat and Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) voted in favour.

Podemos, meanwhile, decided to abstain, while one of its parliamentary factions, the Stalinist-led United Left (IU), voted against. Ludicrously, IU leader and Minister of Consumer Affairs Alberto Garzón abstained, to ensure that no NATO minister voted against a pro-NATO resolution.

Podemos spokesperson Gerardo Pisarello presented Podemos' "anti-war" charade. He said, 'Let Sweden and Finland make the decision they consider appropriate, but it will not be in our name.'

The entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO is a reckless provocation against Russia. The US-led alliance wants Stockholm and Helsinki not only due to their well-equipped and modern militaries but due to their geostrategic location. Finland shares a 1,300-kilometre border with Russia that is within striking distance of St. Petersburg. Swedish membership in NATO would leave Russia totally encircled by NATO states in the Baltic Sea

and make it easier for the alliance to supply its battle groups in the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in case of war with Russia.

Pisarello then cynically complained that the EU was not conducting the peace policy upon which it is supposedly founded. He said that the EU was 'founded with the stated aim of seeking peace and is doing little or nothing to stop the war.' In fact, European states have played leading roles in NATO's imperialist wars across the Middle East, Balkans, and Africa for decades, which have devastated entire societies like Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Chad, and Mali, claiming millions of lives and turning tens of millions into refugees.

Playing the anti-American card, Pisarello claimed Europe must have its own imperialist interests outside of NATO. "The priority of the USA is that Europe does not have its own defence policy," he declared, after saying that being part of NATO is "subordinating oneself to a military and economic oligarchy that does not care about the fate of those attacked ... It is an oligarchy that will support the most warmongering extreme right."

In fact, the PSOE-Podemos government has sent anti-tank missiles to far-right Ukrainian militias.

Pisarello's stunt had two audiences. On the one side, the whole debate had the aim of signaling to the US and NATO governments Spain's full support to the Ukrainian army's counteroffensive against Russia in Kharkiv. The US and EU have responded to the collapse of Moscow's northern front by further intensifying their involvement in the war against Russia in Ukraine. They are sending millions more in offensive weaponry, adding to the more than \$50 billion in armaments and other assistance sent to date.

Spain's PSOE-Podemos governments has been a key ally in supporting Kiev's offensive. In early September, the Spanish air force transported 75 field artillery pallets in five flights to Ukraine. Spanish 155mm howitzer

ammunition was used in the offensive. Madrid also sent 20 armoured vehicles, an anti-aircraft system, and 1,000 tons of diesel and 30,000 winter uniforms. The Spanish military will soon begin to train Ukrainian soldiers in Spain on tanks, missile systems, battlefield medicine, and demining work at an army base in Zaragoza.

On the other, the Spanish ruling class uses the false anti-war posturing of Podemos to channel rising anti-war sentiment behind the PSOE-Podemos government.

The PSOE-Podemos government will include a 20 percent military spending increase in a Special Defense Plan, the most expensive in Spain's modern history. The increase will thus not be included in the 2023 budget, and Podemos will claim that—as promised in August by the deputy prime minister and de facto leader of Podemos, Yolanda Díaz—it does not support a budget that raises military spending.

At the same time, the PSOE and Podemos will field more T8x8 tanks, NH-90 helicopters, Eurofighters, S-80 submarines, F-100 warships and a Hisdesat satellite, paid for by Spanish workers.

What underlies this staggering hypocrisy of Podemos? It acts this way because it is highly conscious of the deep opposition to war within the working class, and therefore to Podemos itself. A mass radicalisation of the working class is underway, as strikes erupt in Europe and the US, and amid the greatest collapse of living standards since the 1930s, a pandemic that has claimed tens of millions of lives, and an escalating war against Russia by NATO in Europe.

Podemos is a petty-bourgeois party that defends the interests of Spanish imperialism: imperialist war abroad, and class war at home in the form of austerity, bank and corporate bailouts, and police assaults on strikers.

If Podemos can continue its “anti-war” charades, it is above all due to forces like the Morenoite Revolutionary Workers' Current (CRT) which protect its left flank. In each successive stunt mounted by Podemos since Russia's February 2022 invasion, the CRT has intervened to claim Podemos can be pressured to the left by the pro-war trade unions.

A recent article on the CRT website *La Izquierda Diario*, titled, “The government intends to increase military spending by 20 percent in 2023 and prepares with Podemos and the PCE to justify its support,” claims that Podemos is passively supporting war, trapped in a pro-war PSOE government.

“All this exercise of trickery for the 2023 budget seeks not only to obtain parliamentary support, but also to

ensure they are not questioned by the left. Yolanda Díaz works this way so that the climate of [Podemos'] passive support for Sánchez government' foreign policy continues to predominate, including its pro-NATO commitment and the brutal tightening of immigration policies. All of this with the complicity of a union bureaucracy that has not criticized one iota of this new imperialist escalation of which its government is a part.”

What does the CRT propose? That the same union bureaucracy under the Podemos-linked Workers Commissions (CCOO) and the social-democratic General Union of Workers (UGT) unions, deeply tied to the PSOE-Podemos government, lead a struggle against the militarist budgets and inflation:

“It is necessary to demand that the union organisations end their submission to the coalition government and that they propose a plan of struggle that incorporates both the defense of wages eaten away by inflation and the crisis, and opposition to militarist plans.”

This seeks to confine rising social opposition to inflation and war useless appeals to Podemos and the unions, which have crushed one strike after another in Spain. That is, the CRT itself is a barely disguised wing of Podemos.

Building an anti-war movement requires building rank-and-file committees independent of the union bureaucracies in an open political struggle against tendencies like Podemos and the CRT. Only such a struggle can mobilize the workers independently of the national bureaucracies tied to imperialism, and crush the political obstacle posed by these pseudo-left parties to a struggle against war and for socialism.



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