

Spanish Morenoites cover for Podemos sending tanks to Ukraine

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In Spain and across Europe, the ruling class is responding to mounting social protests and strikes by escalating the NATO war with Russia. Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government has now increased the number of Leopard II tanks it is sending Ukraine from six to ten, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced yesterday in a visit to Kiev. This is unmasking Podemos as a right-wing party of Spanish imperialism, terrified of the incipiently revolutionary upsurge in the working class.

In France, millions of workers have gone on strike against Macron's plan to slash tens of billions of euros from pensions by raising the retirement age. In Britain, millions have joined a strike wave now lasting seven months and encompassing millions. In Spain, air traffic controllers, airline workers, retail workers, health care workers, Amazon staff and teachers have gone on strike, in a direct confrontation with the PSOE-Podemos government and the union bureaucracy.

Spain's Morenoite Workers' Revolutionary Current (CRT), the Spanish affiliate of Argentina's Socialist Workers Party (PST) and *Révolution Permanente* in France is desperately trying to prevent a break by the working class with Podemos. It advances various spurious arguments denying the imperialist character of Podemos and holding out false hopes that Podemos might suddenly turn 180 degrees and spearhead a movement against its own war policy.

These absurd arguments feature on the CRT's *La Izquierda Diario* web site and CRT member Lucia Nistal's video blog. Podemos, one of its article states, "maintains passive support to the imperialist agenda of the government, while the party's leadership or some lawmakers—in addition to [former Podemos leader] Pablo Iglesias from his podcast—provide themselves with a left-wing cover with some critical statements." Another article declares:

"The militarism of the government that has proclaimed itself as 'the most progressive in history' does not seem to be stopping. From the PSOE, one of the great historical parties defending the interests of Spanish imperialism, this is not surprising. The main novelty is that this escalation, which has been accompanied by the largest increase in military spending in recent years, is blessed today with the votes of lawmakers and senators of Podemos and its participation in the Council of Ministers."

The claims that Podemos is providing "passive support" to Spanish imperialism, or that Podemos was once not an imperialist party, are ludicrous. Firstly, Podemos is not providing "passive support" to Spanish imperialism, as CRT claims, but leading a NATO government that has expended vast resources on waging war on Russia.

Last month, Sánchez boasted that Spain has sent "dozens of shipments" of offensive weapons to Ukraine, "including 400 tons of ammunition, light weapons, anti-tank systems, an Aspide missile battery and six Hawk anti-aircraft systems." He added that Madrid sent uniforms and equipment for the cold, sanitary equipment, generators, all-terrain light vehicles, ambulances and humanitarian aid. It is also offering training on air defence and on how to operate Leopard tanks, surface-to-air missile systems to Estonia on Russia's border, and, potentially, nuclear-capable F-16 fighter jets.

As to the claim Podemos' support for imperialism is a "novelty," in fact it has been exposed by the WSWs since the foundation of Podemos in 2014. That year, Podemos promoted Spanish nationalism, courted the military and boasted of having its own support groups within the armed forces. Its former leader, Pablo Iglesias, repeatedly stated that if he had to increase military spending, "I would do it." And, once he was in the government, Iglesias indeed did.

In 2015, Podemos recruited former Chief of the Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez to run in the general elections, offering the party as a political platform for NATO and the Spanish army. Rodríguez had led the Spanish army participation in US-led neo-colonial wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). Rodríguez also played a major role in the 2011 NATO war on Libya. The war resulted in over 30,000 deaths, leaving Libya in ruins and trapped in an ongoing civil war between the competing Islamist factions that NATO had supported against the Libyan government.

Once in power, Podemos defended US military bases in Spain, the sending of weapons to Saudi Arabia for its bloody war in Yemen and supported the highest increase in military spending since the far-right Franco regime.

Imperialist war abroad goes hand in hand with class war at home. The PSOE-Podemos government deployed armoured vehicles against striking metalworkers and 23,000 police against the three-week nationwide truck drivers strike, the largest police deployment and scabbing operation against a strike in Spanish history. It is now working to pass new repressive laws to

criminalise protests and strikes.

Podemos is not a “neo-reformist” party as CRT claims that, now that it is in government, is moving to the right and integrating itself into the capitalist regime. It is a pro-war tool of the banks and big business, with a long record of implementing EU bank and corporate bailouts. Drawn from the affluent middle class and based on postmodernist identity politics of race and gender, Podemos is entirely devoted to protecting the privileges its members enjoy in the existing order.

Having falsified the character and record of Podemos, the CRT promotes illusions in Podemos’ demagoguery. Nistal disingenuously wonders why Podemos “limits itself to talking about a supposed diplomatic solution: a negotiation between the same people who have brought us here motivated by their imperialist interests and those of their oligarchy? And, of course, without breaking ranks beyond rhetoric, alongside its PSOE government partner, being part of a government that will send tanks and that has been promoting imperialist escalation with NATO from the beginning.”

Nistal is perpetrating a political fraud. There is no peace faction in Podemos thinking to break free of its government alliance with Spanish social-democracy and take a revolutionary path, and whose cowardly refusal to challenge the PSOE’s policy is somehow surprising. The record of Podemos is irrefutable proof that even if it did “break ranks” from the PSOE, it would remain an imperialist party.

The CRT’s back-handed promotion of Podemos reflects its petty-bourgeois hostility to building a politically independent movement in the working class. Ever since it emerged from the Stalinist-led United Left coalition in 2005 and officially founded as the Workers’ Revolutionary Current in 2017, the CRT has insisted that it is a vehicle for “regroupment.” However, it is seeking to regroup with tendencies that in fact loudly support war.

Nistal calls on the “anti-capitalist left, the labor organizations and the anti-militarist movements from all over Europe and Russia to take the streets to stop a barbarity that threatens to reproduce the worst pages of the history of 20th-century capitalism.”

This includes, CRT’s allies, the Pabloite *Anticapitalistas*, with which they built the Popular Assembly Against War, largely defunct after being set up last March ahead of the NATO summit in Madrid. Anticapitalistas, a founder of Podemos in 2014, has a long record of supporting NATO’s imperialist wars in Syria, Libya and the Ukraine.

Its online magazine *Viento Sur* is full of anti-Russian propaganda. It regularly posts articles by Gilbert Achcar, a paid adviser to the British army and member of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), the French affiliate of *Anticapitalistas* in Spain, who early in the war advocated mass delivery of weapons “with no strings attached.”

Weeks before Podemos’ tank escalation was announced, Anticapitalistas posted an article on *Viento Sur* arguing for it. Titled “Against the Russian war of aggression, the urgency of a radically decolonial left,” Catherine Samary claims: “without the arms and the obvious logistical help provided to the Ukrainian army [by NATO], it would have been in a weak position and would have been forced to surrender quickly.” Therefore, she argues, one must arm the far-right Ukrainian regime for war with

Russia: “Support for the resistance (armed and unarmed) of the Ukrainian people in its diversity, in defence of its right to self-determination.”

CRT’s other allies include the Internationalist Struggle and Red Current groups. These petty-bourgeois organizations claim Ukraine is waging a democratic struggle for self-determination against Russian “imperialism.” They compete with each other in sending “aid” material to the Kiev regime, while accusing NATO of not sending enough military equipment against Russia.

Characteristically, Red Current posted a piece attacking NATO from the right, under the title “The shipment of tanks and weapons for Ukraine is insufficient.” It writes: “We must demand the necessary weaponry and military technology be sent to Ukraine to defeat Putin. In addition to the HIMARS multiple missile launcher system, the Ukrainians demand MGM-140 ATACMS missiles with a range of 300 kilometers. The Ukrainians are also asking for F-15, F-16, and A-10 Thunderbolt II fighter jets (specifically for infantry air support). Without this, it is impossible to control the airspace.”

Red Current concludes, “The campaign ‘Weapons for Ukraine for Putin’s military defeat’ must be intensified and taken up by all trade unions and workers’ organizations.”

As for the “labour organisations,” by which these forces mean the union bureaucracy, they are not forces to oppose imperialist war, but the domestic labour police of the PSOE-Podemos government. Over the past year, CCOO, UGT and CGT have strangled one strike after another and imposed wages increases well below inflation, allowing the government to escalate its war in the Ukraine.

What Nistal and the CRT are proposing here is not an anti-war movement in the working class, but a regroupment with the union bureaucracy and parties with direct links to Podemos and the war. They will not lead, but strangle a movement against the escalating great-power war in Europe.

The alternative to this right-wing, pro-war milieu is the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement. It fights to build the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and File Committees (IWA-RFC), independent of the union bureaucracies, in a political struggle against tendencies like Podemos and the CRT, and to organize struggles of the working class against war and inflation in Spain and across Europe. Sections of the ICFI in Spain and beyond are the revolutionary vanguard that must be built to oppose the petty-bourgeois politics of the CRT.



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