

Québec Solidaire: Electoral squabbles and support for NATO's war with Russia

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The National Council of Québec Solidaire (QS)—a pseudo-left, Quebec nationalist party with representation in the Quebec National Assembly—was held on February 11 and 12 under conditions of the ever escalating war in Ukraine, the continuing pandemic and a powerful global upsurge of the class struggle. It had essentially nothing to say on these burning issues.

Visibly disappointed with the results of the October 2022 Quebec election, delegates to the National Council focused instead on the decline in the QS vote, both in real terms and percentage of the popular vote. Having failed to reach their goal of becoming the official opposition in the Quebec legislature, they outlined a plan to reach it at the next elections, primarily by moving further to the right.

There is nothing surprising in QS's indifference to the immense dangers, as well as the revolutionary possibilities, raised by the historic crisis of global capitalism. Although regularly portrayed by the mainstream media as a "left" party, QS is in reality a party of the upper-middle class. Its dominant traits are complacency, narrow-minded provincialism, Quebec chauvinism and opposition to the class struggle.

Convinced of the sanctity of the electoral calendar set by the ruling class, and unable to imagine that it could be overturned by an explosion of the class struggle in Canada and internationally, the 300 delegates to the National Council were narrowly focused on the 2026 election in Quebec. Their main concern is to seize this occasion—more than three years from now—to become even more integrated into the ruling establishment.

In the days leading up to the meeting, the mainstream capitalist media speculated widely about a possible confrontation between the QS leadership and elements dissatisfied with its policy of "moving to the center."

But this was a tempest in a teacup. These criticisms, coming from pseudo-Marxist groups and other "radical" elements that operate within QS, do not in any way reject the party's pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist policies. As for the leadership, which is working hard to rid QS of its previous image as a "protest" party, it dismissed these criticisms out of hand.

The COVID-19 pandemic received no mention at the National Council, although 2022 was the year in which it claimed the most fatalities in Quebec and across Canada. Having supported the homicidal "profits before lives" policy of the CAQ (Coalition Avenir Québec) government and the entire Canadian ruling elite for the past three years, QS is now siding with the governments

and big business media in treating the pandemic as if it is entirely a thing of the past.

The QS National Council meeting was particularly conspicuous in its silence on the war instigated in Ukraine by Washington and its allies, including Canada. This reflects its fundamental agreement with the consensus among the Quebec and Canadian ruling elite on the militaristic turn in Canada's foreign policy.

Held just before the first anniversary of the conflict, the QS National Council remained silent on the more than 200,000 deaths and millions of refugees caused by this war. It did not say a word about the direct involvement of the NATO countries (led by the United States, with the support of Canada and the European powers), which are escalating the conflict through their massive delivery of weapons to the Ukrainian army, including the sending of tanks, and soon, fighter planes. This reckless NATO policy is bringing the world closer to a direct armed conflict between Russia and NATO, with the probable use of nuclear weapons.

QS fully accepts the lie constantly repeated by the imperialist politicians and media that the war in Ukraine was triggered by Russia's "unprovoked" invasion of Ukraine.

Underscoring Quebec Solidaire's support for the North American and European imperialist powers' war on Russia, on Feb. 23, the one-year anniversary of the war's launch, it presented a motion to the National Assembly—subsequently unanimously supported by the CAQ and the other right-wing parties—that denounced Russian "aggression" and supported the war aims of the far-right Zelensky government, including the restoration of Ukraine's "territorial integrity" through the recapture of the majority Russian-speaking Donbass and Crimea.

In fact, the conflict was prepared over several decades and planned and provoked by the Western powers. NATO took advantage of the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 by the Stalinist bureaucracy to expand into Eastern Europe right up to Russia's borders. In an effort to subjugate Russia and control its vast natural resources, Washington and its allies fomented far-right anti-Russian groups, which played a key role in the 2014 coup in Ukraine to overthrow the pro-Russian government at the time.

Québec Solidaire does not oppose the rearmament of NATO countries, in which the federal Liberal government of Justin Trudeau is fully involved. It does not condemn the military-strategic offensive of Washington and Ottawa, not just against Russia, but also China, which the United States sees as its main competitor.

The only foreign policy issue discussed at the National Council meeting was Iran. The repression of women by the country's clerical-led bourgeois nationalist regime was widely denounced. But this was not done from the standpoint of mobilizing the international working class to demand the lifting of the brutal US sanctions that are crippling the country's economy and supporting the struggles of the Iranian workers for democratic rights and social equality. Rather, it was to provide pseudo-humanitarian cover for the imperialist campaign—including with a QS demand Ottawa tighten sanctions—to overthrow the Iranian clerical regime that Washington deems hostile to its geostrategic interests. This is the same treatment that the US and its Canadian and European allies have unleashed on countries such as Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, with catastrophic consequences for their people.

The National Council was an opportunity for QS to redouble its efforts to present itself as a “responsible” party in the eyes of the ruling class, notably through an increased promotion of Quebec nationalism.

QS has promised to be more vocal in advocating Quebec independence, that is, the formation of a capitalist *République du Québec* as an integral part of NATO, NORAD and the Canada-US-Mexico economic bloc. This reactionary project of a section of the ruling class has historically been associated with the Parti Québécois (PQ), a big-business party that has played a key role in pushing the entire Quebec ruling class towards a more virulent anti-immigrant chauvinism.

At every stage of this turn, Québec Solidaire has used its “left-wing” image to give it a false “progressive” legitimacy, going so far as to facilitate the CAQ's legislative agenda to stir up Quebec chauvinism. Not only has QS refused to campaign against the anti-immigrant Bill 21 that specifically targets Muslim women, but it voted for Bill 96, an anti-democratic law that reinforces the status of French as the province's only “common” and “official” language.

By inviting the president of OUI-Québec to address its National Council, QS confirmed that it is fully committed to this right-wing nationalism and wants to intensify its long-standing orientation towards the PQ, whose popular electoral base has melted away after years of imposing savage cuts to education and health care while in government. OUI-Québec is a “civil society” organization that succeeded the Parti Québécois-dominated Sovereignty Council. It aims for a “convergence” of sovereignist parties, both “left” (such as QS) and “right” (the PQ and its federal sister party, the Bloc Québécois), in order to achieve Quebec independence.

It is in this context that ostensibly Marxist pseudo-left groups, such as Fightback, step in to disguise the profoundly anti-worker nature of Québec Solidaire. Their criticisms of QS are limited to advocating a more vocal politics of protest. They have nothing to do with developing an independent political movement of the working class, fighting for a socialist-internationalist program. Under the pretext that it is possible to push QS further “to the left,” they never denounce its pro-imperialist positions, nor its chauvinist nationalist program.

In the name of support for workers' struggles, these elements urge QS to get closer to the union bureaucracy, which has worked

hand in hand with the ruling class for decades to suppress working class resistance and impose the demands of big business. In this spirit, they welcomed a resolution, accepted by the Council delegates, that QS “support the inter-union Common Front and stand up for public services.

The acute crisis of the capitalist system is today fuelling a powerful upsurge of working class struggles around the world. It can be seen in the mass strikes and demonstrations in France against Macron's assault on pensions, the wave of strikes in Britain to demand a sharp rise in wages in the face of uncontrolled inflation, or the rising tide of strikes in the United States for the first time in decades.

It is another clear confirmation that the international working class is the only social force capable of offering a progressive way out of the social catastrophe caused by capitalism—the pandemic, brutal austerity, war and environmental destruction.

But this conception is entirely rejected by Québec Solidaire and similar pseudo-left parties at the international level, such as Podemos in Spain or the Left Party in Germany. Instead, these elements offer their services to the bourgeoisie to give a “left” cover to its war and austerity program, in the hope of playing a more direct role in the ruling elite's brutal attacks on the working class.

In its aspirations to form the official opposition in Quebec, QS has undoubtedly in mind the coalition agreement Podemos, its “sister” party in Spain has struck with the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE). The PSOE-Podemos coalition government, which has already deployed armoured vehicles against striking steelworkers, recently announced that it is sending tanks to Ukraine as part of NATO's war against Russia.

It is this same anti-worker and imperialist program that QS has committed itself to impose with its pleas to the ruling class that it be given a greater role in the political establishment and exercise of power.



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