

Pentagon's Ukraine war leaks expose Spain's Podemos and its pseudo-left rival, Sumar

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The leaking of Pentagon documents on the NATO war in Ukraine has provoked a faction fight between Podemos and its newly-founded electoral rival, Sumar, led by Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz. The leaked documents exposed the lies of NATO governments, including the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government Díaz leads. They reveal that NATO has troops in Ukraine, that NATO is directly involved in the war, and that Ukraine's military is in a far worse position than presented by NATO media.

The entire corrupt pseudo-left political milieu of Podemos and Sumar lied to the public and hid from the working class the imminent danger of all-out NATO-Russia war. Last February, Minister of Foreign Affairs José Manuel Albares said sending troops to Ukraine "is absolutely ruled out by Spain, the European Union or NATO." He dismissed reports of NATO troops on the ground as a "hoax."

PSOE-Podemos Defense Minister Margarita Robles said: "Never, ever, will any troops from a NATO country, and Spain is one of them, participate in the war in Ukraine." This is, she claimed, "an absolutely impossible scenario; non-existent."

Albares and Robles were reacting to a speech made days before by Podemos general secretary and Minister of Social Rights Ione Belarra. Also hiding that NATO troops are already fighting Russia in Ukraine, Belarra postured as a critic of her own government. She said, "They told us, first, that we were never going to send offensive material. Then they told us that we did have to send anti-aircraft missiles; then, that we are going to send tanks and now jet fighters; what's next, sending Spanish soldiers to Ukraine?"

The documents show more than 150 US and NATO troops are, in fact, deployed in Ukraine. Podemos and Sumar are political tools of a conspiracy, hatched behind the backs of the people of Spain and the NATO countries, to wage an undeclared war on Russia, a nuclear-armed power.

In a press conference, Belarra said that Podemos is "very concerned about these leaks" released "according to which elite NATO, British, French soldiers are reportedly already in Ukraine." She claimed that "there are two different positions within this government" on the Ukraine war, without adding any further points on the positions of Podemos or Sumar.

After the initial shock of the leaks, Podemos reacted by trying

to cover itself, launching a factional struggle accusing Sumar of being pro-NATO. The level of cynicism involved is virtually indescribable. Indeed, Podemos leader Ione Belarra and Sumar leader and Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz are both ministers of a NATO government that, only last Friday, sent Leopard tanks to the Ukrainian army.

For days, however, Podemos officials denounced Sumar for being subservient to NATO and the Ukraine war. In a ludicrous video posted last week, Podemos made thinly-veiled criticisms of Díaz, reminding her of her lack of opposition to sending weapons to Ukraine. Podemos members, it asserted, are "outraged when they see that their ministers look the other way with NATO and the war in Ukraine, and that only Ione [Belarra] says what she thinks" about the war.

On CTXT, ex-Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias defended his party's supposed criticisms of NATO against Díaz, stating: "These leaked security documents confirm an involvement of the United States and Europe in the war that goes beyond sending money and weapons. That is, they would confirm that we have been lied to."

He then defended Belarra's criticisms of NATO war strategy in Ukraine, claiming that her previous statements are "relevant and the best proof that Podemos ministers are criticized in the media for daring to say what the leaders of Sumar privately recognize is true."

Yolanda Díaz reacted by accusing Iglesias of male chauvinism on a La Sexta TV interview. Asked whether she believed Iglesias imposed "male-chauvinist situations" on her, she replied: "Yes, absolutely, I think that I did and so did all of Spain. It was this thumping on the table during negotiations. ... I'm used to this, Jordi."

She thereupon doubled down on defending the arguments the PSOE-Podemos government has given to justify the NATO war on Russia in Ukraine, whatever the risks. She said, "If I were prime minister, I would fulfill a fundamental objective, which is to deploy our own European security policy. The Russian war is illegal, illegitimate, and all my solidarity with Ukraine. When there is an illegitimate aggression, the Ukrainian people have the right to defense."

This debate exposes both the fraud of Sumar's claim to represent a political alternative to Podemos, and of Podemos'

posturing as an “anti-imperialist” critic of Sumar.

Díaz and Sumar as a whole have the closest ties to Podemos; Díaz was nominated as Deputy Prime Minister by former Podemos leader Iglesias after he resigned from that post. The Sumar alliance she leads includes various Podemos allies: the Stalinist-led United Left (IU), More Country (Más País), Greens Equo (Verdes Equo), and In Common We Can (ECP). It includes two government ministers and the mayors of Barcelona and Valencia—Spain’s second and third largest cities, respectively.

Podemos was not invited, however, after Díaz refused to commit to internal primary elections. A faction fight is now unfolding inside the affluent petty-bourgeois milieu of Podemos for access to influence and posts in the capitalist state machine. The Sumar (“Unite”) electoral platform was launched earlier this month by Deputy Prime Minister and Labour Minister Díaz for this year’s national elections in December. Díaz announced that she aspires to become prime minister.

There are no differences of political principle or class orientation between Sumar and Podemos. Both are populist, nationalist and pro-capitalist parties of the affluent middle class, theoretically rooted in a postmodernist rejection of Marxism and of the revolutionary role of the working class. Both are led by pro-NATO ministers of the Spanish capitalist state that wage imperialist war abroad and class war on workers at home.

Sumar has no differences with Podemos’ ultra-reactionary domestic policies, which it has helped to formulate and impose on the working class. This includes pension cuts and a labour reform; pumping €140 billion of EU bailout funds into Spanish corporations and banks; a profits-over-lives policy in the COVID-19 pandemic leading to over 160,000 deaths; the barbaric incarceration and murder of migrants, including the infamous massacre of 37 refugees at the borders of the Spanish enclave of Melilla in Africa; and violent crackdowns on striking metalworkers and truck drivers.

Despite their differences on foreign policy, neither Belarra nor Díaz specifically criticizes their government’s decision to send €320 million in military aid to Ukraine. This includes rocket launchers, armoured vehicles and tanks and the training of over 850 Ukrainian soldiers on Spanish soil. Spanish weapons provided by Podemos and Sumar ended up in the hands of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion.

To the extent that differences have arisen, they are on questions of how to market Spanish imperialism’s foreign policy. This reflects not opposition to war in the working class, but tactical divisions within the Spanish political establishment over how to balance its war policies between Washington, the NATO alliance, the European Union, Russia, and the growing influence of China. For now, at least, Sumar is more closely associating itself with support for NATO and Podemos with a call for strategic autonomy from Washington.

After French President Emmanuel Macron traveled to China

and called for “European strategic autonomy” from Washington, Iglesias told CTXT that he defends “European strategic autonomy” and wants to remain within NATO. He said Podemos “must continue to hold our hand out despite the insults.”

But this “autonomy” means an independent imperialist course for European capitalism, against rivals abroad and the workers at home. While Washington and the US-led NATO alliance play leading roles in stoking wars with Russia and China in a bid to preserve US global hegemony, Europe’s pseudo-left parties that advocate a “multi-polar” capitalist order are also unflinchingly reactionary. The calls for “autonomy” is not to protect the liberty and social and democratic rights of working people, but, instead, the liberty of the capitalist classes to wage war in the pursuit of their profit interests.

Podemos and Sumar are united in their hostility to the global upsurge of the working class against real wage cuts and attacks on social and democratic rights. This is reflected in the strike by over 120,000 Canadian federal government workers, the three-month-long mass protests in France against President Emmanuel Macron’s pension cuts, and major strikes by health care and postal workers in Britain and education workers in the United States. All of these struggles are objectively defying the ruling class.

Workers in struggle must be warned: Podemos, Sumar and all their pseudo-left apologists internationally are dragging the world to war. They must be stopped. Preventing a catastrophic military escalation requires mobilizing the working class against Podemos and similar pseudo-left parties in all the NATO countries and internationally.

May Day 2023 will be a vital step in the building of this movement. On Sunday, April 30, the International Committee of the Fourth International, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality and the World Socialist Web Site will hold an online global May Day rally to mobilize workers and youth around the world against the war in Ukraine. We urge all of those opposed to the war to register today.



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