

Spain's pseudo-left Revolutionary Left promotes Mélenchon in France, Podemos government at home

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24 May 2023

In Spain and across Europe, the ruling class is responding to mounting social protests and strikes by escalating the NATO war with Russia and imposing austerity at home. In France, millions of workers have protested amid overwhelming popular opposition to President Emmanuel Macron's plan to slash tens of billions of euros from pensions. Strikes against austerity and inflation are growing in Italy, Germany, Britain, and Spain.

The pseudo-left Revolutionary Left (IR) group, the former Spanish affiliate of the Committee for a Workers' International, is responding by promoting Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France (La France Insoumise—LFI) and Podemos in Spain. They aim to strengthen the authority of these parties of capitalist government and block a movement on their left, in the working class. It takes place just as these organizations have exposed themselves as rotten tools of the banks and the military brass.

On April 22 and 23, IR's student front, the Student Union, participated in the founding congress of L'Union d'Étudiante, a new French student union faction backed by Mélenchon's LFI. IR reported: "After the Congress, the delegation of the Student Union and Revolutionary Left held a brief meeting with Jean-Luc Mélenchon, deputy and leader of the LFI, who has played a very important role in this great battle against Macron." It added:

"In the conversation we had with Mélenchon, we exchanged impressions on the importance of the French rebellion experience for Europe, on the prospects for the conflict and the tasks of the left that claims to be revolutionary and transformative. It was a very cordial and positive conversation. We also spoke with the leaders of the LFI Youth, Aurelien Le Coq and the deputy Louis Boyard, with whom we agreed to continue strengthening relations and deepening solidarity and collaboration."

Their subsequent articles hailed LFI and Mélenchon as expressing "the energy of the workers uprising" and "becoming a reference point for the movement, encouraging the intensification of the mobilization and criticizing the farce of parliamentary democracy."

All these statements are lies, aimed at covering the role that LFI and Mélenchon play amid the revolutionary upsurge in France against Macron's pension cuts. Mélenchon received nearly 8 million votes in last year's presidential election, largely in working class

neighborhoods of France's major cities. Since strikes and protests began in January, Mélenchon has refused to call on his voters to take mass strike action to bring down Macron—though this could rapidly shut down France's economy, as two-thirds of French people want to block the economy with a general strike.

Mélenchon has abstained from any such call, however, instead issuing an absurd proposal for a general strike addressed to the trade union leaders, who had no intention of acting on it. The French union bureaucracies are waiting until June 6 before the next protests against Macron's pension cuts, while also reopening talks with him. The aim is to stifle and demobilize the developing struggle by the workers against the capitalist state's illegitimate pension cuts.

The Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, has insisted workers cannot rely on the French union bureaucracies. Despite their pretensions to being more "radical" than their European counterparts elsewhere, they play a counterrevolutionary role. Instead, workers must build rank-and-file committees to unite workers across Europe to bring down the Macron government through a general strike and to struggle against war and inflation.

Just after promoting Mélenchon, IR was forced to backtrack. In an article on May 19, IR claimed that French unions' "moderation has been responded to with a 'normalization of relations' of LFI, which has meant its abandonment of a confrontational strategy." It added:

"[A]t a critical moment in the struggle, LFI's leadership does not seem to be willing to implement a strategy that confronts the union bureaucracy ... In their latest statements they have raised the slogan of a Constituent Assembly for the VI Republic. But they are not talking about a Socialist Republic, but about a mere bourgeois Parliament, yes, 'more democratic' and with more 'control of the people.' ... Really, comrades, is this the combat program that we need today to defeat Macron and the oligarchy?"

The article is a self-indictment of their own political bankruptcy. It is also a warning that IR will play in Spain the same role as Mélenchon in France: helping the union bureaucracy strangle opposition to the capitalist government—in Spain's case, the PSOE-Podemos government.

IR speaks for privileged middle-class layers in and around the union

bureaucracy and Podemos and funded to the tune of hundreds of thousands of euros by the PSOE-Podemos government through its Student Union, Free and Combative feminist front and Friedrich Engels Foundation. It is terrified at workers breaking with LFI and Podemos.

IR's leader, Juan Ignacio Ramos, recently intervened in the faction fight between Podemos and its newly founded electoral rival, Sumar, led by Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz, to boost Podemos. Under the title "Sumar? Yolanda Díaz, the best option for the PSOE to destroy Podemos," Ramos promotes illusions that Podemos can suddenly turn 180 degrees and spearhead a movement against its own war and austerity policies. Podemos, Ramos writes,

"can continue to insist on a strategy that leads them to a resounding defeat. Or they can rectify, appeal to their militant base, to the working class and wage the political battle to raise a combative alternative that is not subordinated to the PSOE, that does not accept with resignation its script, [and] its pro-business and pro-imperialist policy. It seems difficult, because that implies, obviously, abandoning this government and leading a consistent left-wing opposition, promoting mass mobilization and breaking social peace."

The claims that Podemos can lead "consistent left-wing opposition" are as ludicrous as the perspective of Mélenchon waging a struggle against the union bureaucracy. Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government has increased the number of Leopard II tanks and training it is sending Ukraine, hiked military spending to record levels, while imposing pension cuts and a reactionary labour reform that has expanded low salaries and precariousness. Podemos is a pro-war tool of the banks and big business, with a long record of implementing EU bank and corporate bailouts.

Revolutionary Left's anti-Trotskyist roots and its orientation to Podemos

IR's cheerleading of Podemos and LFI is a product of the petty-bourgeois, anti-working class tradition it defends. This organization traces its roots back to a British-based group led by Ted Grant that split from the Fourth International in the late 1940s.

The Grant group subsequently became among the most vociferous promoters of Pabloism, which the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) was formed to fight in 1953. Adapting to the post-Second World War restabilization of capitalism, the Pabloites wrote off the working class as an independent revolutionary force. They argued that the Stalinist bureaucracy, bourgeois nationalist movements in the colonial countries, and the union and social democratic bureaucracies would be transformed under mass pressure into revolutionary organizations.

The American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon founded the ICFI, issuing an Open Letter to Trotskyists around the world in 1953. The ICFI took up the struggle to defend Trotskyism against Pabloite revisionism.

Grant and his followers developed "entryism" as a permanent

strategic orientation. They aimed not at politically educating workers through a struggle against the pro-capitalist bureaucracies, but to keep radicalized workers within the confines of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracies.

To this day, IR insists that struggles of workers and youth must remain within the bounds acceptable to trade union and Stalinist bureaucracies. Indeed, IR's historical origins lie during the Transition to parliamentary democracy after the death of fascist dictator general Francisco Franco in 1975. Its predecessor, Nuevo Claridad (New Clarity) worked within the PSOE, a party re-founded in 1974 to better serve the needs of the banks and of NATO.

Expelled from the PSOE in the 1980s, in 2014, IR and the Student Union affiliated themselves with the Stalinist-led United Left, declaring that "the programme that the Student Union has always defended coincides on many points with the political proposal that is made from the United Left." At that time, IU was a totally discredited organization after decades of supporting PSOE austerity and war. IU leader Cayo Lara personally handed membership cards to IR members.

Months later, IR and the Student Union abandoned IU to enter Podemos after it won over a million votes in the 2014 May European elections. IR then claimed that a possible PSOE-Podemos government—finally realized in 2019—"represents an event of historical significance and has raised enormous expectations." Such a government, it claimed, would be the result of "a great mobilization of the masses across Spain."

Since then, they have sought to promote illusions in Podemos. In the 2021 regional elections of Madrid, it even reached the absurd state when the IR's posters calling for a Podemos vote were larger than those of Podemos itself. In those elections, they boasted of distributing over 121,000 pamphlets and more than 11,000 posters calling for a vote for Podemos. This did not prevent Podemos' debacle in those elections.

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, LFI and IR, 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 these petty-bourgeois attorneys and publicists for Podemos.



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