

Podemos electoral debacle in Spain exposes bankruptcy of Revolutionary Left (IR) group

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Spain's regional and municipal elections have dealt a severe blow to the pseudo-left Podemos party. Podemos lost all its councillors in all major cities across Spain, including Madrid, Valencia, Zaragoza, Tenerife, Burgos, Valladolid, Vigo and Coruña. In Barcelona, Podemos-backed mayor Ada Colau, lost after eight years in office. At a regional level, Podemos fell from 47 regional lawmakers in 2019 to 15.

Its electoral collapse endangers the survival of Podemos, which has ruled in a pro-war, pro-austerity government with the Socialist Party (PSOE) for nearly four years. After the government announced snap elections for July 23, Podemos joined its recently created rival Sumar in a pro-war platform led by acting Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Diaz. Several leading figures in Podemos—including acting Minister of Equality Irene Montero and parliamentary spokesperson Pablo Echenique—were not even placed on electoral lists.

Recent polls released by *El País* show that the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the neo-fascist Vox party could win most seats in parliament in next month's national election, far ahead of the PSOE and Sumar. The poll estimated that a PP-Vox alliance would get more than the 176-seat absolute majority in parliament needed to rule.

The political collapse and discrediting of Podemos is a devastating exposure of its pseudo-left satellites, such as the Revolutionary Left (IR) group. IR is the former Spanish affiliate of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), which has provided unconditional support to Podemos since it was founded in 2014 by a group of Stalinist professors around Pablo Iglesias, as well as by the Pabloite Anticapitalistas party.

Analysing the results, IR describes Podemos as “a mass political force to the left of the PSOE that could have ‘taken heaven by storm.’” The failure of Podemos, IR claims, was due to the wrong decisions of its leadership: it “opted for class collaboration. ... They thought that by entering government hand in hand with the PSOE, they were going to change the lives of the people. The commitment to the ‘progressive’ management of capitalism has gone very wrong.”

Later, IR bemoans that “this government, in which [former Podemos leader] Pablo Iglesias and Podemos participated to force the PSOE to carry out left-wing policies, has done just the opposite.”

This is a political fraud with which IR tries to cover for its nearly decade-long support for Podemos. The leaders of Podemos did not agree to work with the PSOE, Spain's main party of bourgeois rule since the end of the Franco era, by mistake. Its anti-working class policies at home and militarist-war policies abroad are not errors that can be solved by the “good” advice of IR, which consists in Podemos employing more pseudo-left rhetoric.

Quite the contrary, the leadership of Podemos acts consciously to implement its programme of austerity and its defense of imperialist war and capitalism. The PSOE-Podemos government has carried out reactionary reforms of the labor market and pensions, expanded military spending to record levels, while large Spanish corporations reaped record profits. This was not a mistake, but a deliberately planned and implemented policy.

As Podemos lawmaker, secretary of state and general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, Enrique Santiago, explained, “[I]n the history of Spain there has not been such a large transfer of resources from the state to private companies as the one carried out by this government.”

In parallel, they have unconditional military and financial support to Ukraine in order to promote NATO's imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine. All this is very similar to what a PP-Vox government could have done, had it been in power.

Following the call for early elections by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, which is a barely concealed strategy to transfer power to a PP-Vox government, PSOE and the Podemos-backed Sumar party have continued to defend Spanish imperialism. The acting government sent an addendum to the EU's bailout fund to Brussels, the Plan of Recovery, to receive €94 billion for banks and large corporations. This money is not free. It will imply devastating austerity plans and spending cuts, all of which will be imposed on workers by the new government.

In order to receive these funds, a commission of EU Parliament lawmakers from Vox, PP, PSOE and Podemos traveled from Brussels to Spain to audit these funds to ensure that they were reaching the financial aristocracy. This is further proof that Podemos is not a “left-wing force” or one that can be pressured to the left. It is completely involved within the Spanish political establishment, forming a united front with the

rest of the parties, including the neo-fascist Vox party.

The PSOE-Podemos government's Defence Ministry has made it clear it will continue to escalate the war against Russia. Acting Defence Minister Margarita Robles has protested NATO for not including Spanish military-industry complex companies in its defense industry plans. Robles also demanded that the record spending by the army not be changed, irrespective of who rules Spain, declaring: "The armed forces belong to all Spaniards, they do not belong to any political party."

IR now cynically claims that all this came as a surprise, when Podemos "decided to give up continuing the battle in the streets, organizing the working class into a militant, combative party with a revolutionary programme to advance class consciousness, and gave up breaking with a capitalist logic that has condemned them to complete impotence and to administer misery."

The leaders of Podemos did not give up anything, because they never had any other intentions. Podemos arose after a strong period of strikes and struggles by the European working class after the 2008 global capitalist crisis, particularly acute in Southern Europe—Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain. From the outset, Podemos aimed to derail this movement and channel it through the institutions of capitalist government, so as to strangle the possibility of revolutionary struggle.

Like its European partners—Syriza in Greece, the Left Party in Germany and Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France—the leaders of Podemos promote postmodernism and identity politics and are deeply hostile to Marxism and the revolutionary role of the working class. They do not aim to raise workers' consciousness but to suppress it, to deceive the workers with pseudo-left rhetoric that the bourgeois media use to try to market them to voters.

IR claims in its article that it has the right to make friendly criticisms of Podemos, writing, "We are not sectarians, indeed, we have been criticized countless times by sects for critically supporting Podemos at the polls, for refusing to defend abstention or null voting, a position completely removed from Marxism and consistent Leninism."

What IR labels "sectarian" is the principled exposure of Podemos by the WSWS for nearly a decade. In its first article posted days before Podemos emerged as an electoral force in the 2014 European parliamentary elections, the WSWS warned that the new party was "a political fraud" that seeks "above all to politically disarm the working class" and defends a "pro-capitalist and nationalist programme." Since then, the WSWS has posted hundreds of articles exposing Podemos' militarism, pro-austerity and anti-migrant policies.

Explaining these facts has nothing in common with sectarianism, which, properly understood, means the refusal to intervene in the struggles of the working class in order to cultivate a political tendency that is arbitrarily separated from the rest of the workers movement.

The fact that the WSWS and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) criticise Podemos is not a legitimate basis for accusing them of sectarianism. Indeed, criticism of Podemos does not constitute a refusal to intervene in workers struggles; it is the precondition for intervening politically in these struggles, which Podemos ruthlessly attacks with mass deployments of riot police. While the ICFI indeed separates itself from Podemos, a reactionary party of capitalist government, this does not in any way separate it from the struggles of the working class.

IR, on the other hand, advances a political perspective based on nationalism, calling workers to subordinate themselves to pro-war and pro-austerity parties like Podemos. This reflects the longstanding orientation of the entire CWI tendency to labor bureaucracies that strangle the working class. IR first worked within the PSOE, before being expelled in the 1980s and affiliating themselves with the Stalinist-led United Left (IU), declaring that its programme "coincides on many points with the political proposal that is made from the United Left."

Workers and young people, if they are to carry out a real fight against imperialism and war, as well as social inequality and austerity, require, above all, political clarity—especially on the role of Podemos, the trade unions and their apologists such as the IR, and their defence of imperialism.

The cement that glues IR to all these political tendencies is the fact that IR is itself a barely disguised wing of the capitalist state, defending the interests of the same upper-middle class forces as these parties. They are all terrified at the rising confrontation between the working class and capitalist governments across Europe, including in Spain. While the ICFI seeks to arm workers with a revolutionary perspective, IR seeks to trap mounting discontent behind an orientation to these reactionary parties.



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