

Amid anti-genocide protests, Spain's Revolutionary Left group covers up its ties to PSOE-Sumar government

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In America and across Europe and internationally, the ruling class is responding to mounting student anti-genocide protests with violent crackdowns. Hundreds of students are being arrested in universities across the United States. In Spain, hundreds of thousands have protested since the beginning of the war, while in Sanaa, Yemen, over a million people gathered last week to protest the US-backed genocide in Gaza.

The pseudo-left Revolutionary Left (IR) group, the former Spanish affiliate of both the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) and the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), is suddenly trying to distance itself from PSOE-Sumar government, and its main ally in parliament, Podemos. All these parties are accomplices in the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians.

Under first the PSOE-Podemos government (2020-2023), and now the PSOE-Sumar government, IR backed these parties of capitalist government and worked to block working class opposition on their left. Both governments increased trade, military, and economic relations with the Zionist regime, particularly in arms. Under PSOE-Podemos, Spain sold weapons to Israel worth hundreds of millions of euros while Madrid spent millions buying weapons with the "combat-tested" mark. The PSOE-Sumar government kept buying and selling millions of euros worth of weaponry from Israel.

IR is now attempting to distance itself from these parties, to hide its support for parties complicit in the genocide. In "PSOE-Sumar, the NATO Government and the militarism," IR states:

[W]e cannot place any trust in a government that has demonstrated ad nauseam that it operates for the interests of the capitalists and follows the directives of imperialist masters in Washington. Likewise, other political forces, such as [Podemos], which no longer bear governmental responsibilities but center their entire strategy on institutional action, do not present a viable alternative. Many of the aggressive measures mentioned were endorsed while Podemos held ministerial positions, and their current critique, devoid of any assumption of responsibility, only exacerbates their credibility crisis.

Militarism is an organic feature of social democracy. Historically, they have consistently acquiesced to the ruling

class, and this tendency persists in their current bellicose stance in Ukraine, their NATO alignment, and their complicity with the Zionist genocide. This leftist faction does not constitute part of the solution but rather contributes to the problem.

IR is running from Podemos like rats fleeing from a sinking ship. IR knows Podemos and Sumar's support is plummeting to all-time lows. In the regional elections held this year in Galicia and the Basque Country, Podemos failed to win any seats. Eight years before, Podemos was the most voted party in the Basque Country. The polls are equally dire for the upcoming European elections, where Podemos is expected to receive 2.3 percent of the vote, down from 10 percent in 2019.

Sumar, a split-off from Podemos ruling with the PSOE at national level, is also collapsing. It did not obtain any lawmakers in Galicia and only one seat in the Basque Country. It is polling at 2.9 percent in European elections.

The crisis of the main "Left Populist" parties of bourgeois rule in Spain is exposing IR's own bankruptcy. Over the past decade, IR has been one of the greatest cheerleaders of Podemos and its participation in a PSOE-led government. In 2019, when Podemos entered into government, IR wrote that this "represents an event of historical significance which has raised enormous expectations." Such a government," they said, was "the result of the great mass mobilization that has shaken the Spanish State."

Despite Podemos' flagrantly right-wing policies—raising the military budget, slashing pensions and wages, providing billions of euros in corporate bailouts and pursuing a profits-over-lives policy in the COVID-19 pandemic that cost over 140,000 lives—IR kept working as a de facto faction of Podemos.

IR threw all its strength into supporting the leader and founder of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, in the Madrid regional elections in 2021. It called for a Podemos vote with posters larger than those of the pseudo-left party itself. They boasted of hanging 11,000 posters and distributing more than 121,000 pamphlets backing Iglesias.

Over the next years, the PSOE-Podemos government escalated its war at home and abroad. It provided hundreds of millions in weaponry to the far-right Ukrainian regime in the NATO war against Russia, massacred refugees on Spain's borders, imposed

minimum service requirements on air crews, and attacked striking truck drivers and metal workers. All the while, it intensified its support for the far-right Netanyahu government, despite its brutal occupation of Gaza that led to the October 7 uprising against Israel.

Nonetheless, IR once again called the “left” to rally behind the PSOE-Sumar government after last year’s elections. In November 2023, the PSOE and Sumar formed a new coalition government, without Podemos. Soon after, IR posted an article titled “Pedro Sánchez supports his investiture: a Government for social peace and collaboration with imperialism.” While admitting the reactionary character of the PSOE-Sumar government, IR continued:

“Despite everything, the constitution of a PSOE-Sumar Government appears in the eyes of a large majority of our class as a million times preferable to a PP-Vox Government. From Revolutionary Left we perfectly understand this opinion. Of course, it would be profoundly wrong for the left-wing forces with parliamentary representation to deny their critical support for Sánchez’s investiture!”

Soon after, IR welcomed Podemos’ exit from government as many of its voters joined pro-Palestinian protests. The largest and most sustained anti-war movement since the Vietnam War era was erupting around the world, with millions participating in protests. IR stated “From Revolutionary Left we welcome this decision, and we say that it has to be the beginning of a real break with the social democratic policies of that left that has become an essential prop of capitalist rule...”

Podemos left government not because it opposed the genocide in Gaza, austerity or militarism, all of which it supported from 2020 to 2023. To make clear its continuing support for the PSOE and Sumar, Podemos leader Ione Belarra declared that “the democratic forces [Podemos, PSOE and Sumar] must work together” against the far-right.

IR now is following the exact same path. It is distancing itself from Podemos, the same way Podemos took distance from the PSOE-Sumar government. However, it aims not to mobilize working class opposition to the PSOE-Sumar government, but to guard the left flank of the pseudo-left parties tasked with defending the strategic interests of Spanish imperialism.

IR is promoting regionalist and nationalist forces that defend the PSOE-Sumar government in parliament. For the Galician elections, it called for a vote to the Nationalist Galician Bloc (BNG), stating: “It would be very important to strengthen street action and demand from day one that a BNG-PSOE Government fulfills its promises.” In the Basque country it called to vote for the Basque-nationalist EH Bildu party, arguing, “we are not abstentionists, and that is why we ask for a critical vote for EH Bildu.”

Both parties have supported the PSOE-Podemos and the PSOE-Sumar governments in hiking military expenditure to record levels

and turning Spain into a spearhead of NATO against Russia in Ukraine.

IR justifies its support for these parties under the idea that “Revolutionary communists, Leninists, have never championed abstentionism” in elections. This is a shameless and miserable charade. IR has never been a Marxist organization. This organization traces its roots back to a British-based group led by Ted Grant that broke with Trotskyism and 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 social order, 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.

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.

In Spain, IR demanded that workers and youth should subordinate themselves to the PSOE in the 1980s, then the Stalinist-led United Left and then Podemos since 2014. Now, faced with the growing collapse of Podemos, IR is searching for new tools to prop up the discredited PSOE-Sumar government.

Mobilizing the working class to halt the genocide requires breaking with the nationalist outlook of pseudo-left groups that subordinate workers to the Spanish capitalist state. Only an international, independent movement of the working class can halt arms deliveries to Israel, stop repression of protests, and end the wars. The political basis of such a movement is the International Committee of the Fourth International’s struggle to expose pseudo-left tendencies such as IR and build sections of the ICFI in Spain and internationally as the revolutionary leadership of the working class.



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