

Pabloite Anticapitalistas promotes Catalan nationalist alliance with Spanish imperialism

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The petty-bourgeois Pabloite Anticapitalistas tendency is championing the recent agreement between Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government and the Catalan nationalist Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), backed by the right-wing Catalan-nationalist Junts party. This pact led to the formation of a pro-union regional government in Catalonia, headed by the PSOE's Salvador Illa, ending over a decade of rule by pro-separatist Catalan nationalist parties.

The deal, in the final analysis, represents a closing of ranks of the Spanish and Catalan bourgeoisie for war, austerity and attacks on democratic rights. It comes as the PSOE-Sumar government prepares new rounds of austerity at home against the working class and arms the far-right Kiev regime in Ukraine against Russia and the Zionist regime in its genocide against Palestinians.

Anticapitalistas covers up the deeply reactionary politics underlying the agreement. It tries to present the deal as part of ongoing attempts by “democratic” factions of the Catalan and Spanish bourgeoisie to resolve conflicts between Madrid and Barcelona. This is the character of the article written by Martí Caussa in Anticapitalistas' magazine *Viento Sur*, titled “Puigdemont dulls Salvador Illa's investiture.” Caussa states:

The agreement consists of a series of proposals to improve and develop [Catalan] autonomy, which is the only thing that PSC [the Catalan affiliate of the PSOE] and PSOE can accept, but there is no reference to a self-determination referendum, a proposal that remains the majority preference within Catalan society. The most advanced proposal is to immediately promote the creation of a National Convention with the goal of “addressing the resolution of the existing political conflict and presenting its conclusions to Parliament.”

On the other hand, the agreement's narrative recognises the existence of the Catalan nation, the political conflict with the State, the origins of October 1st, the need for amnesty, the defense of the Catalan language and the Catalan school system, the necessity of a change in financing, and a series of proposals in the economic and social spheres that the PSC previously rejected (such as reviving the pilot plan for a universal basic income). Overall, the text represents a significant shift in the discourse of both PSC and PSOE.

This is a lie. There is no “significant shift in the discourse” of the PSOE. Catalonia—the second richest region in the country—is to control

the taxes generated within its territory, except for a percentage allocated to state services and a solidarity fund for Spain's other regions, the exact amount of which has yet to be determined. Meanwhile, the ERC is expected to support PSOE-Sumar's budgets, which will channel billions into the military and the weapons industry at the expense of education, healthcare, and social spending.

As with all deals among regional capitalist cliques across Spain, this comes at the expense of budgets in other regions. This will enable the right-wing PP and the neo-fascist Vox party to pose as defenders of the “equality” of all Spaniards against the “selfish” Catalans.

The PSOE's Salvador Illa has been installed as the regional Catalan premier and is preparing for a showdown with the working class. Illa has promised to increase the Catalan police force from 18,000 to 22,000 officers by 2030. He has recruited Ramon Espadaler, former regional Interior Minister from 2012 to 2015 under the right-wing Catalan nationalists, as the new regional justice minister, with a track record of attacking workers and students protesting against austerity and hikes in student fees.

The installation of the Catalan government takes place, however, as the PSOE-Sumar government further escalates war abroad. Sánchez's minority government relies on the support of Catalan nationalists in the Spanish parliament to continue enforcing austerity measures demanded by Brussels, which target the working class at home, and simultaneously, to keep increasing defence budgets and supplying weapons to far-right regimes, such as Ukraine in NATO's war against Russia in Eastern Europe, and Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

Last week, Spain's Defense Minister, Margarita Robles, defended the use of Spanish weapons by the Kiev regime in its attack on the Russian province of Kursk. Robles stated, “This is a war, and Ukraine will use all the material it considers necessary at any given moment. We have nothing to say on this.”

In the same week, Iran leaked drone footage showing the Spanish aircraft carrier Juan Carlos I, the flagship of the Spanish Navy, patrolling alongside US naval vessels in the Persian Gulf. This development highlights the alignment of Spain with Biden administration's escalating war preparations targeting Iran, a key ally of Russia and China in the Middle East.

With empty references to “self-determination,” Caussa seeks to obscure reality: the Catalan nationalists are signing up to the PSOE-Sumar government lurching towards a war involving nuclear-armed powers with catastrophic consequences.

Significantly, separation from Spain is not the majority sentiment in Catalonia. According to the latest poll by Catalonia's Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 40 percent support secession, while 53 percent

oppose it. This only further raises the question: who are the voices within the Catalan establishment advocating for a “self-determination referendum?”

Junts and ERC, are both pro-war parties that have supported the NATO-backed separatist movements in the Balkans that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia, as well as interventions in Afghanistan, Libya, and the regime change attempt in Syria. They have made it clear that their vision of an independent Catalonia would involve membership in both the European Union and NATO.

No one personifies this better than former Catalan regional premier Carles Puigdemont, a fervent Zionist whose party has supported Israel’s genocide against Palestinians. Recently, Junts aligned with the PP and Vox, in voting against ending arms trade with Israel.

Puigdemont has hailed the Zionist project of creating an ethnically exclusive state, stating “it has a national and cultural project very similar to Catalonia’s” and that “two nations are persecuted for protecting their language and fighting against empires that want to neutralise it.”

Causa mentions Puigdemont only to likewise promote him. Puigdemont made a surprise return to Spain during Illa’s investiture debate. He gave a short speech to crowds in Barcelona and then disappeared, successfully evading a police operation ostensibly intended to arrest him for his role in organizing the October 2017 Catalan independence referendum.

Causa states that Puigdemont’s speech was a “dramatic move and his denunciations [on the repression to the Catalan nationalist movement] were necessary and important. But his disappearance after a five-minute speech was a surprise. ... While respecting his decision and recognising that everyone has the right to avoid arrest, I must say that I do not clearly see the political rationale behind his actions.”

Causa again obscures reality: in reality, Puigdemont’s trip aligned neatly with the political agenda of the Spanish and Catalan bourgeoisies. Neither PSOE-Sumar government wanted to arrest Puigdemont, nor did the former Catalan premier want to be arrested. Had this occurred, it could have provoked mass protests in Barcelona in opposition to police state repression, like in 2017 and 2019, and created calls among Puigdemont’s supporters to use Junts’ six lawmakers in the Spanish parliament to bring down the minority PSOE-Sumar government.

Puigdemont has in fact accepted the deal with Spanish imperialism, stating that the installation of Illa as Catalan regional premier “is the result of legitimate decisions.” After the Catalan nationalists lost its parliamentary majority last May “a phase has ended,” he declared.

Causa finishes his piece promoting the PSOE-Sumar government as the bulwark against the far-right, an argument repeatedly deployed by the PSOE and its pseudo-left allies as a political weapon to suppress rising social and political discontent against the government. He states:

Sánchez faces the choice of either respecting the right to self-determination of Catalonia and all the peoples that make up the Spanish state or reverting to a fundamentalist view of Spain’s unity... If he chooses the latter, the consequences will be worse than before: mass mobilisations and repression will return, but this time it is very likely that it will open the door of the government to the PP and the neo-fascist Vox. Because with Spanish fundamentalism, repression will extend to all those who are different: racism against immigrants will

intensify, there will be a regression in the rights of women and LGTBI people, and everyone who thinks or acts differently than the “good Spaniards” will be considered an enemy. Sánchez should be aware that he himself has been marked as an enemy to be politically defeated. ... necessity should advise him to promote a common front in defense of democracy.”

This is a political whitewash of the role of Spanish social-democracy and its pseudo left allies. Sánchez, first under PSOE-Podemos government (2019-2023) and now the PSOE-Sumar government, has not been a bulwark defending democracy against the far-right. Indeed, the rehabilitation of Francoism by Spain’s top courts, the growth of far-right Vox and coup plot threats stemming from the army, have only grown under his rule.

In 2020, after mass strikes in Spain against official inaction in the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of high-ranking former officers wrote to Spanish King Felipe VI, appealing for him to launch a coup. Top officers linked to Vox called to shoot “26 million” people as in Franco’s 1936 coup. In 2021, the Constitutional Court ruled that Franco did not commit crimes against humanity during either the civil war or his bloody 40-year dictatorship.

As for the repression of the Catalan nationalists, it was under the PSOE-Podemos government that nine Catalan leaders were sentenced to over a decade in jail over fraudulent charges. When mass protests erupted against this, the government savagely repressed them.

As to migration policy, Sánchez has implemented the policy advocated by the neo-fascist Vox party, including deploying the army against refugees in the border, allowing makeshift boats with migrants to sink on their way to the Canary Islands and terrorising migrants at the border. In 2021, the PSOE-Podemos government committed one of the worst massacres against refugees in modern European history. On June 24, Spanish border police fired tear gas canisters and rubber bullets to drive thousands of desperate refugees from the fences of Melilla. At least 100 refugees died.

The turn by the ruling elites toward fascism and dictatorship is rooted fundamentally in the extreme growth of social inequality and the escalation of imperialist war. It will be halted not by the PSOE and deals with the Catalan nationalists, which are deeply implicated in these policies, but through the development of the expanding class struggle throughout the world into a conscious political movement for socialism.

Anticapitalistas’ record underscores that the decisive strategic question is building the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) as the revolutionary leadership in the working class to break the political obstacle posed by these middle class parties to the working class. This requires building sections of ICFI in Spain and internationally, based on the colossal political experiences embodied in its defence of Trotskyism against middle class groups like Anticapitalistas.



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