

Spanish Pabloites hail gender politics of Podemos as it wages NATO war on Russia

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On Saturday, a leader of the Pabloite *Anticapitalistas* tendency that helped found Podemos in 2014, Teresa Rodríguez, was invited to publish a column in Spain's leading social-democratic daily, *El País*.

As Rodríguez's piece was published, the NATO countries were waging their ongoing war on Russia in Ukraine that threatens to escalate into all-out nuclear war. Prices of food, energy and other essentials are exploding, devastating workers' living standards, and COVID-19 is killing tens of thousands and debilitating millions each month. Though humanity is teetering on the verge of economic collapse and nuclear conflagration, Rodríguez had nothing to say on these issues.

Instead, she penned a piece titled "Je suis Irene Montero," ["I am Irene Montero"], referring to Irene Montero, the Podemos minister for gender equality in Spain's current Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government. Her title was a reference to the French government's "Je suis Charlie" slogan after the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks, which it used to stoke anti-Muslim sentiment and back police-state policies.

She wrote, "Oui, I say ... Yes! 'I am Irene Montero'. Despite everything. Despite the fact that we don't have good *google*, as they say nowadays, nor do we share the same political project. And I say this proudly because I am tired of this feeling that they are giving us women and feminism with a string of constant attacks on the Minister of Equality."

Rodríguez criticized the neo-fascist Vox party's attacks on Montero, accusing her of sexualising children, promoting sex among minors and paedophilia. The question, however, was not a defence of democratic rights of children and public education but an appeal for the middle class to support the PSOE-Podemos government.

The fact is that *Anticapitalistas* and Podemos share the same perspective. *Anticapitalistas* founded Podemos in 2014 along with Stalinist professors like Pablo Iglesias,

Montero's current partner, and Irene Montero herself, a former member of the Communist Party Youth.

In May 2020, *Anticapitalistas* left Podemos. They did so, not because they opposed any of Podemos' signature policies in government: its back-to-work order amid the pandemic which led to tens of thousands of deaths, its austerity policies and its police state measures against Catalan nationalists. In fact, its statement on the split said it "will support all the gains made within this [PSOE-Podemos government] framework and we will fight together against the extreme right." It added that "there is no doubt that we will find ourselves in many common struggles with the people of Podemos."

In the video posted on the split, Rodríguez signalled in feminist language that *Anticapitalistas* would leave Podemos but remain politically close to it: "I believe that in politics as in life, there are ways of separating that are aggressive, violent and patriarchal, and then there are civilized, respectful, empathetic and even loving ways, which are the healthiest, which can be built and are possible in politics. That is the significance of the message we are sending today."

Iglesias, then leader of Podemos, responded by praising Rodríguez for giving an "example of how to do things right," repeating, "There is not good-bye, only see-you-soon."

Now, Rodríguez, is signalling with the same language that the middle class must rally to Podemos on the basis of feminist identity politics. "We have left young girls alone at a time when they most needed feminism in the face of the reactionary and neo-sexist wave that permeates certain youth environments. ... But Irene Montero has been attacked for almost everything, even literally for breathing. ... They do not harass the [male] ministers of any branch or the ministers of other matters in the same way. Not in the same way, not with the same violence."

She concluded, "Irene Montero is not a friend of mine,

but the blows they are giving her are the ones that the patriarchy would like to give each one of us. For this reason, today ‘je suis Irene Montero’. Tomorrow, we’ll see.”

Montero is a reactionary Podemos minister, who specialises in promoting identity politics in Podemos’ middle class base while covering for the PSOE-Podemos’ anti-worker policies.

Her government is sending hundreds of millions of euros worth of offensive military equipment to the Ukrainian regime against Russia, even sending anti-tank missiles to the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion. Madrid is directly training Ukrainian soldiers on Spanish soil. It also supports the entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO—another reckless provocation against Moscow—and is preparing to hike Spain’s military budget by a historic 20 percent.

On COVID-19, Podemos supported the “let it rip” policy that killed over 160,000 Spaniards and left over 1 million debilitated by Long COVID. To pay for European Union COVID-19 bailout funds to the banks and corporations, it has implemented ruthless austerity in the form of labour reforms, pension cuts and violent police crackdowns on workers striking against below-inflation wage increases.

Montero’s most recent infamous action came after the June 24 police massacre of at least 37 refugees trying to cross the Moroccan border into the Spanish enclave of Melilla. Two days after the killings, at a government press conference, Montero refused to take a position on the massacre after being asked by journalists five times. The press later confirmed that her silence had been agreed upon between the PSOE and Podemos.

Rodriguez’s sudden appearance on the pages of *El País* is the product of a political operation cleared at the highest levels of the state. Factions of the bourgeoisie are concerned that Podemos faces an electoral debacle in next year’s November elections, due to the unpopular right-wing policies it has pursued. *Anticapitalistas* is once again intervening to prop the PSOE-Podemos government.

According to the latest electoral survey of Ágora Integral, corresponding to the month of September, the right-wing Popular Party (PP) would defeat the Socialist Party (PSOE). The PP would go from 91 seats to 139 in the 350-seat assembly, and the PSOE would obtain 92, falling from the previous 120 seats and Podemos would go down from 26 to 23. The far-right Vox party would go down from 52 seats to 49 but could form a coalition with the PP that would have a comfortable absolute majority.

El País has aggressively intervened to promote Podemos, supporting its latest electoral project launched by its de facto leader, Yolanda Díaz, Sumar (“Unite”). In an editorial last July, it said: “The fact that an electoral artifact that was born to articulate the space to the left of the PSOE is led by someone who occupies the post of deputy prime minister is positive. ... [She] will need a project and a political organization that manages to retune the left amid a mixture of discontent, discomfort and fear after a decade and a half chaining one crisis after another.”

While Rodríguez’s *Anticapitalistas* presents her defence of Podemos as part of a campaign to combat Vox, the illusions she is peddling in the pro-capitalist Podemos only pave the way for the rise of the far right.

The hostility of middle class “left populist” parties like Podemos to the workers is irrefutably established. Italy has demonstrated how the role of the pseudo-left, which has supported austerity, NATO wars and anti-migrant campaigns, only strengthens the far right. Last week, Georgia Meloni of the Brothers of Italy (FdI) party, the political successor of the Fascist Party of World War II-era dictator Benito Mussolini, won the elections.

Key lessons must be learned. The decisive question facing workers and youth in Spain and internationally who are opposed to the US-NATO war against Russia in the Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, social austerity and military-police repression is to break politically from petty-bourgeois forces like Podemos and *Anticapitalistas*.

The reactionary record of *Anticapitalistas* underscores that the decisive strategic question today is building the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) as the revolutionary leadership in the working class. This requires building sections of the ICFI in Spain and internationally, based on the colossal political experiences embodied in its defence of Trotskyism, to wage an uncompromising struggle against the PSOE-Podemos government, its appendages in the union bureaucracy and groups like *Anticapitalistas*.



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