

Rise of anti-immigrant BSW from Germany's Left Party exposes Podemos and Sumar in Spain

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The emergence of the anti-immigrant Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) out of Germany's Left Party exposes the Left Party's main allies in Spain, Podemos and its split-off, Sumar. In power, they have waged NATO imperialist wars, imposed austerity at home and backed violent police assaults on strikers. Their alliance with forces that are now developing explicitly xenophobic policies exposes whatever remains of their fraudulent claims to represent a left-wing alternative for the Spanish population.

There is deep opposition in the working class to militarism and far-right reaction. However, workers can only develop a struggle against the NATO alliance's war escalation against Russia and the Middle East, and the rise of fascistic reaction at home, by mobilizing the working class independently from pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class like Podemos in a struggle for socialism. This is the urgent conclusion that the political charlatans who lead Podemos and Sumar are desperate to prevent workers from drawing.

Instead, they vented their concerns in an article posted on online newspaper *Público*, titled "Alarm among the left in Spain over Die Linke's collapse in Germany and the rise of Wagenknecht's illiberals."

"Among the Spanish left, there is a certain level of concern, though not fear," *Público* reported, citing anonymous high-ranking members of Podemos, Sumar, and the Stalinist-led United Left (IU) coalition. It reviewed the results of this month's regional elections in Germany. The far-right AfD secured 32.8 percent in Thuringia and 30.6 percent in Saxony, while the BSW, which tries to distract its support for German imperialism with anti-immigrant rhetoric, won 16 percent and 12 percent, respectively, in its first state elections.

The anonymous Sumar official said it is "disturbing" that a BSW has fully entered the political scene which "criminalizes the migrant population, stigmatizes the LGTBI community" and "adopts the anti-vaccine narrative." Sumar added, "There is no electorate [in Spain] for a party that mixes far-right and left-wing values" like BSW, which Sumar considers "a particular case" in Germany. Sumar acknowledges that BSW's results are a "symptom" that "German progressive forces are

failing to provide solutions to the problems of economic insecurity and political apathy among the German public."

Similarly, Podemos sources said the results were "concerning because it shows that not only is there a reactionary wave shaking all of Europe, but that this discourse is permeating and contaminating all parties." BSW, they insist, is not a left-wing party: "A racist party can never be left-wing." It has "many points in common," they add, "with the far-right."

From Stalinist-led United Left, also part of the PSOE-Sumar government, Antonio Maíllo, its general secretary, said that the main lesson from Germany is that the "left" must address "the material conditions of the working class with the recovery of common sense in our political positions, combating all forms of inequality, including those based on origin or gender."

This is sheer political charlatanry, since all the criticisms of Podemos, Sumar and IU make of the Left Party apply with full force to their own deeply reactionary record in government.

In Germany, the Left Party and their allied union bureaucracies bear central responsibility for the growth of the far-right AfD. Their support for the Stalinist restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and their opposition to building a socialist movement in the working class has prevented mass opposition to the German bourgeoisie's policies of rearmament, war and austerity from finding left-wing expression. Where they entered into regional government, the Left Party pursued policies just as right-wing as the SPD and the Greens, with whom they work closely.

As the WSWS noted in its perspective, AfD's political landslide lies not in the character of the AfD, but "must be explained as a product of the shift to the right of all the bourgeois parties, in particular, the supposed 'left.' They rolled out the red carpet for the AfD and opened all the doors for it."

But what is the record in Spain? Podemos and Sumar face the same collapse as The Left Party. Podemos, once the third-largest party in 2015 with 69 seats, collapsed to just 4 seats in parliament. Sumar, which split from Podemos, has seen its support dwindle since its foundation last year. In last year's general elections, despite being a coalition of fifteen parties including Podemos, it lost 600,000 votes compared to the 2019

elections, dropping to 3 million votes. It has also consistently lost seats in every regional election since. In this year's European elections, its vote share was more than halved.

The latest poll published by the *El País* gives Sumar 6.1 percent of the vote intention and Podemos 2.7 percent in the event of a general election. Meanwhile, the far-right Se Acabó La Fiesta (The Party is Over), which promotes anti-migrant and anti-feminist positions, has risen to 4.7 percent and the neo-fascist Vox party remains above 10 percent.

This is the product of the support of the affluent middle class operatives of Podemos, Sumar and IU for imperialist war abroad and class war at home. This paved the way for the Spanish ruling class as a whole to legitimize fascist parties and organizations, which are allowed to demagogically exploit mass social discontent with the reactionary policies implemented by parties falsely presented by capitalist media as "left."

In power, Podemos and Sumar implemented labor reforms that extended precarious working conditions, imposed a pension reform to cut future pensions, and enforced wage increases below inflation rates. These governments have also brutally repressed workers' struggles, deploying armored vehicles and riot police against striking metalworkers in Cadiz and mobilizing 23,000 police to suppress a 75,000-strong truckers' strike protesting rising fuel prices.

Podemos and Sumar fervently support NATO's proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and supply arms to the Zionist regime in its genocide against Palestinians. This contributed to a devastating loss of life now estimated at around 200,000 dead.

Their statements of concern over the fascistic coloration of the BSW's anti-refugee agitation is utterly hypocritical, given their own bloody record of crimes against refugees. Under their rule, tens of thousands of migrants have drowned attempting to reach the Canary Islands. Those who survived were confined in detention centers, built under their auspices, where they endured unsanitary and inhumane conditions while awaiting deportation.

Podemos was in power during the infamous Melilla Massacre, when Spanish security forces caused the deaths of at least 100 refugees, mostly fleeing from war-torn South Sudan, through suffocation from tear gas and beatings, which provoked an ensuing stampede. Now, the PSOE-Sumar government is threatening to carry out mass expulsions of migrants.

Moreover, neither Podemos and Sumar nor the Left Party forces have an issue with alliances with the far-right. In 2015, they hailed Greece's Syriza when it forged a coalition government with the ultra-right Independent Greeks (Anel) as a signal to the Greek and international bourgeoisie that its new government was no threat to their fundamental interests.

Moreover, in 2018, a campaign emerged among top associates of Podemos General Secretary Pablo Iglesias endorsing the policies of Italy's far-right-wing government to

seek to create a new movement based on nationalism, protectionism and appeals to the far right. They hailed the Italian neo-fascists' "Dignity Decree" as "a remarkable effort to defend the Italian people against the lords of finance." They remained silent on Rome's austerity policies, military intervention in Libya, terror campaign against the Roma and refugees, and plans for mass deportations of refugees.

In fact, the main tactical difference separating Podemos and Sumar from BSW is not migration or alliances with the far-right, but NATO's war against Russia. The BSW's statements of concern over the NATO war in Russia, in a demagogic effort to win votes among workers in the former East Germany opposed to war with Russia, produces panic among the pro-war operatives of Podemos and its allies. Sumar told *Público* it is "disturbing" that a BSW "has made numerous ambiguous statements regarding Putin's regime and his invasion of Ukraine."

Sumar and Podemos fear not the emergence of a BSW-type pro-Vox party in Spain, but that their ever more right-wing trajectory can provoke a conscious break of workers on their left, and support for the Marxist criticisms of the pseudo-left by the International Committee of the Fourth International. The basis for such a movement exists in the rapid development of the class struggle around the world. The same contradictions that are propelling the imperialist powers towards war also provide the impulse of struggles by the working class that will acquire a revolutionary character.

But such a movement above all requires a clear socialist perspective and programme. That can only be developed and fought for through a relentless struggle against the pro-imperialist pseudo-left and nationalist tendencies that seek to chain workers and young people to one or another section of the capitalist establishment. Fascism, war and exploitation can only be combatted by mobilising the working class against their cause, capitalism. No problem can be solved without a socialist struggle breaking the power of banks and corporations and putting them under the democratic control of the working class.



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