

Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias joins state commission running Spanish intelligence

By Alejandro López
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Podemos leader and deputy prime minister of the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government, Pablo Iglesias, has been invited onto the Intelligence Affairs Commission, the body that directs, supervises and controls the activities of the *Centro Nacional de Inteligencia* (National Intelligence Centre—CNI). Last week, for the first time, he took part in its weekly sessions, having been sworn to secrecy.

According to the law, one of the commission's functions is to draft the annual Intelligence Directive. This is a critical, secret document delivered to the CNI, which lays out what the CNI's objectives will be.

The members of the commission propose these objectives to Socialist Party Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. If he approves them, they are included in the directive. The commission also ensures coordination between the intelligence services and the police, the army and the rest of the state machine.

The CNI's main mission is “to prevent and avoid any risk or threat that affects the independence and integrity of Spain, its national interests and the stability of the rule of law and its institutions.” Thus, Iglesias will instruct the CNI on monitoring and repressing rising social opposition within the working class, reflected in the growing number of strikes and protests against austerity and poverty, police repression in Catalonia, state inaction on the coronavirus and NATO's imperialist wars abroad. His remit will include the CNI's collaboration with Islamist networks in NATO regime-change operations in the Middle East.

The integration of Podemos into the planning of state repression of the working class is not a political error or aberration. It is the culmination of the rightward evolution of an entire layer of “populist” and anti-Marxist organizations that have emerged out of the Stalinist and post-1968 student movements and are rooted in privileged petty-bourgeois social layers. While the corporate media have for decades built up these organizations as “left,” they are in fact viciously hostile to the working class, not only in Spain but internationally.

In Germany, Left Party members sit on the federal

Parliamentary Control Committee that oversees Germany's intelligence agencies. The Left Party is also notorious for its defence of the secret services, as after the exposure of their involvement in mass surveillance and collaboration with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. The Left Party went so far as to invite former domestic intelligence chief Hans-Georg Maassen to one of its party congresses.

In France, Unsubmissive France (LFI) leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon has staffed his party with a considerable layer of trade union executives who occupy top positions in the police and domestic intelligence agencies. These elements help LFI draft its security and international policies, ensuring that LFI supports all of France's overseas military operations.

In Greece, the Syriza (“Coalition of the Radical Left”) government imposed four years of austerity and attacks on democratic rights—including building concentration camps for Middle Eastern refugees—using the police, the intelligence services and the army.

Yesterday, Iglesias erupted in a foul-mouthed tirade against critics of his participation in Spain's spy services, claiming they were in the “sewer.” Presenting his candidacy for general secretary of Podemos in advance of party elections, Iglesias said, “[T]here are some who are annoyed that there will be democratic controls” over the CNI, adding that he was “proud” to belong to a government that ensures that the police and intelligence agencies “do their duty, which is simply to protect the citizenry.”

While Iglesias cited right-wing critics of Podemos as examples, his outburst clearly targeted all opponents of his collaboration with Spain's spy agencies, including on the left.

“Dear friends in the sewer, we are in the government,” Iglesias said, claiming that his critics were “licking the hemorrhoids of the powerful.” Contrasting them to “thousands of police and paramilitary police who work to serve the citizenry,” Iglesias said his critics “are angry that in a democracy there are democratic controls.”

He baldly threatened, “Our democracy will be better when

political, police and journalistic leaders of the sewer are where they should be: in prison.”

Iglesias is not ensuring democratic control of the police state, but joining it. The CNI is not a democratic institution.

Founded in 1968 by the regime of fascist mass murderer Francisco Franco as the National Counter-Subversive Organisation (OCN), and repeatedly renamed during the 1978 “Transition” to parliamentary rule, the CNI compiled death lists of Basque nationalists, who were murdered in Spain and France between 1983 and 1987 under PSOE Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez.

More recently, it intensively monitored Islamic State militants, but did not stop them before they carried out the 2017 Barcelona attacks, and it spied on Podemos itself.

Now the PSOE is working to entrench Podemos in the CNI. Sánchez has decided to include Iglesias on the intelligence commission even though Iglesias’ role as deputy prime minister, social rights minister and 2030 Agenda minister does not involve security or defense matters. Sanchez evaded the 2002 law on the CNI, which states that the commission will include the ministers of foreign affairs, defence, interior and economy, as well as the secretary of the prime minister, the secretary of state for security, and the director of the CNI.

The direct integration of Podemos into the police state machine is the Spanish bourgeoisie’s reaction to the growing upsurge of the working class internationally. Strikes and protests have surged since the start of Sánchez’s legislature, including farmers’ protests against the low prices supermarkets pay for their goods; a brief general strike in the Basque country for better jobs and pensions, which paralysed the region; and workers’ struggles against redundancies by the automaker Nissan in Barcelona, aircraft manufacturer Airbus in Seville, and Canal Sur television in southern Spain’s Andalusia region.

The coronavirus pandemic will intensify class tensions, especially as it hits the manufacturing and tourism sectors. Last week, Spain’s main stock exchange, Ibex 35, lost more than 60 billion euros, or 12 percent of its stock value.

The Catalan nationalist movement is seen as a threat to Spanish territorial integrity. On Saturday, more than 200,000 people (110,000 according to police) flooded Perpignan, France’s bordering region with Catalonia, to hear deposed and exiled Catalan Premier Carles Puigdemont. Since Madrid savagely suppressed the 2017 Catalan independence referendum, Spain’s political establishment has used the Catalan crisis as a pretext to implement draconian police state measures. The CNI has been one of the chief bodies in charge of monitoring, spying on and suppressing mass protests in Catalonia.

Iglesias’ inclusion in the CNI’s commission confirms the

warnings *World Socialist Web Site* that entry into a government of the PSOE, the Spanish bourgeoisie’s traditional social democratic party of austerity and imperialist war, is for the purpose of boosting the stability of the regime as it carries out its wars abroad and attacks on the working class within Spain.

Having lost half of its voters since 2015 as a result of growing social anger against the entire political establishment and the trade unions, Podemos concluded that it could no longer suppress social opposition from the outside and had to fully integrate itself into the state apparatus. This is why Iglesias repeatedly appealed to the social democrats during the elections, even pledging “full loyalty” to the PSOE on all state questions.

Podemos’ integration into the capitalist state vindicates the struggle waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International against the fraudulent theories of “left populism” that reject the working class, the class struggle, socialism and revolutionary policies. Chantal Mouffe, the postmodernist writer and associate of leaders of Syriza and Podemos, made such arguments in her 2018 book *For a Left Populism*.

Mouffe declared: “What is urgently needed is a left populist strategy aimed at the construction of a ‘people,’ combining the variety of democratic resistances against post-democracy in order to establish a more democratic hegemonic formation... I contend that it does not require a ‘revolutionary’ break with the liberal democratic regime.”

Syriza’s record of unpopular austerity and concentration camps for refugees has exposed Mouffe’s charlatany. In fact, the “liberal democratic regime” is self-destructing as all factions of the capitalist class support a rapid move to police state measures targeting the workers. In this context, the crowning of Iglesias as a chief of Spanish intelligence only confirms the police state orientation of the pseudo-left populist defenders of capitalism.

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