

Corruption scandals engulf Spain's monarchy

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The corruption scandals rocking Spain's governing right-wing Popular Party (PP), as well as many other financial and business concerns, have now extended to King Juan Carlos and the royal family.

At a time when the vast majority of the Spanish population are suffering enormous hardship as the result of years of brutal austerity measures, the top layers of society are increasingly hated for profiteering from the crisis while issuing statements for unity to solve it. The king recently said that the way to overcome the crisis would be from everyone in the country "acting together, uniting our voices, rowing in unison".

Last year, the media attempted to whip up sympathy for the king when he broke his hip. The initial story was that it had happened while he was working in his office, but it turned out that he had actually fallen during a secret luxury African safari hunt in Botswana while shooting elephants.

It was also alleged that he had used his privileged position to procure sponsors for criminal financial operations involving his son-in-law, Iñaki Urdangarin, and his wife, the king's daughter Cristina de Borbón.

Urdangarin, an Olympic medal-winning handball player, was given the title of Duke of Palma on his marriage. He is alleged to have embezzled millions of euros of government funds through a non-profit organisation he co-directed between 2004 and 2006. Urdangarin and former business partner Diego Torres are accused of setting up a network of fictitious commercial companies that operated behind the Instituto Nóos, which organised sporting and tourism events.

Both are being investigated for allegedly siphoning off to these companies €5.8 million (US\$7.6 million) belonging to the PP-run governments of Valencia and

the Balearic Islands. This is believed to be just a small part of an intricate web.

In an attempt to keep him out of the scandal, the king sent Urdangarin and his family to Washington, D.C., to take up a consultancy post with the Spanish telecoms firm Telefonica. If the plan was to leave Torres to face the music, he is having none of it. In his defence, Torres produced dozens of documents and e-mail exchanges implicating Urdangarin, his wife and the king, who has not yet been investigated.

The corruption scandals involving members of the royal family are producing questions about their legitimacy and the future of the monarchy.

This raises the key role of the Stalinist Communist Party (PCE) and its leader, Santiago Carrillo, in helping to save the bourgeoisie after the fascist dictator General Francisco Franco died and his regime collapsed in 1975.

The Spanish Civil War began in 1936. It was the response of the ruling elite, under Franco and a section of the military, to the revolution that began in 1931 with the overthrow of the monarchy and the creation of a republic.

The struggle for a revolutionary perspective and programme that could defeat fascism and establish socialism in Spain was sabotaged by the PCE, which slavishly adhered to the Kremlin bureaucracy's Popular Front policy of an alliance with the bourgeoisie. Any attempt by the working class in any country to overthrow capitalism and take power into its own hands was to be prevented. This had a disastrous effect and disarmed the working class, opening the way for a fascist victory and 36 years of oppression.

In 1969, Franco had already appointed then-prince Juan Carlos as his heir apparent. He groomed and trained him over years in the hope that he would

continue Francoism without Franco. After his appointment, in court Juan Carlos swore “fidelity to the principles of the National Movement and other basic laws of the Kingdom”.

He told interviewers, “General Franco is, historically and politically, a truly significant figure for Spain. He was the one that took us out of and resolved our crisis of 1936.”

Asked what General Franco represented for him personally, Juan Carlos answered, “For me, he is a living example, day by day, for his patriotic performance at the service of Spain, and because of that I have a great affection and respect for him.”

The “renovators” within the fascist regime had simultaneously recruited the Communist Party leader in exile, Santiago Carrillo, to ensure that Franco’s eventual death would not lead to a revolutionary situation. Carrillo gave them assurances that they nothing to fear.

When Franco died in 1975, working people came forward to settle accounts with the fascists. It was again Stalinism that diverted these struggles into solely economic demands and collaborated with the fascists and the social democrats—a pact with the bourgeoisie known as “the peaceful transition from fascism to democracy”. In the process, the monarchy was resuscitated.

When in 1981 an attempted coup took place and members of parliament were held hostage inside Congress, Carrillo reinforced the legitimacy of the monarchy by spreading the myth that King Juan Carlos had personally intervened to prevent a return to fascist rule. In fact, the king had held back from opposing the coup until he realised that there was no support for it in the ruling class.

Involved in the coup (many insist he was its leader) was General Alfonso Armada y Comyn, whom the king had appointed as deputy chief of the defence staff just 11 days before. For 25 years, Armada had been Juan Carlos’s mentor during his military training, a best friend and close confidant.

Workers all over Spain, led by the Asturian miners, initiated a general strike and mobilisations against the coup plotters. It was again the Communist Party that came to the rescue and utilised Juan Carlos’s belated intervention to consolidate the monarchy in Spain and anoint him as the defender of democracy.

The myth of the king as the defender of democracy has been perpetuated ever since by a servile media, the labour and trade union bureaucracy, and a number of historians.

An upsurge against the monarchy would threaten the entire network of myths and lies, as well as institutions established during the transition and the renewal of revolutionary struggles. While, in general, the official political parties such as the PSOE and the media have come to the defence of the king, or rather what the king represents, there are more cautious sections that believe a less damaging situation could be achieved by replacing the king with his son, Prince Felipe de Borbón.

The daily *El Pais* published an editorial early this year titled, “El Tiempo del Principe” (The Prince’s Time). While not openly calling for an abdication, it attempted to separate the prince and his wife Leticia, a commoner and divorced journalist, from the king and the corruption scandals.

Today’s Stalinist heir, Izquierda Unida, limits itself to demanding more transparency from the monarchy in terms of their income and expenditure. In its latest article, it even advises the Royal House to demonstrate that the accusations of corruption are false, as they maintain, by suing those like Torres, who are making them.



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