

Popular support for Spain's monarchy plummets

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According to recent polls, nearly two thirds of the Spanish population are in favour of King Juan Carlos abdicating. One poll in the daily *El Mundo* shows that, for the first time, fewer than half of the Spanish people (49.9 percent) want Spain to remain a constitutional monarchy—a drop of 4 percent since last year. Close to 70 percent said they thought the king was unable to restore the monarchy's prestige.

The record-low support for Juan Carlos and the monarchy as an institution signifies the fact that the legitimacy of one of the key pillars in the post-Franco capitalist order is crumbling. Revolutionary changes are on the horizon.

Juan Carlos owes his position as head of state to the fascist dictator General Francisco Franco. His grandfather, King Alfonso XIII, was forced into exile following the start of the Spanish Revolution and the overthrow of the 1923-1930 dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, with which Alfonso was closely associated.

The Second Republic, proclaimed in 1931, introduced modest democratic measures, but even these were regarded in ruling circles as a threat to capitalist private property. The Spanish ruling class reacted by conspiring to overthrow it, culminating in the July 18, 1936, coup d'état by Franco. The victorious fascist regime re-established the monarchy in Spain in 1947, and Franco appointed Juan Carlos as his heir apparent in 1969, closely supervising his training.

When Franco died in 1975, the Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) and Communist Party (PCE) connived with sections of the fascist National Movement to ensure Juan Carlos remained on the throne. They worked together to resuscitate the discredited monarchy and prevent a revolutionary reckoning with fascism during the transition to democracy.

The PCE and its trade union organisation, the Workers

Commissions (Comisiones Obreras, CCOO), which had widespread influence in the working class, worked to demobilise the revolutionary sentiments of the working class in return for limited concessions laid out in the 1978 Moncloa Accords and Worker's Statute. The newly installed monarch, Juan Carlos, was deemed “inviolable” and “not subject to any responsibility”—provisions enshrined in articles 56 and 64 of the current constitution.

Within a few years of the transition, on February 23, 1981, sections of the military attempted a coup d'état, during which Congress and the cabinet were held hostage for 18 hours. It failed, but a myth was propagated that Juan Carlos had personally intervened to prevent it. For more than 30 years, all the main political parties, the trade unions, the media, school textbooks and a number of historians have insisted that Juan Carlos “brought democracy” to Spain and “saved it.”

In February 2012, the German magazine *Der Spiegel* published communiqué 524, sent by the then German ambassador to Spain, revealing the “understanding if not even sympathy” of Juan Carlos for the coup organisers. The historian Julián Casanova described these revelations as “extraordinarily important” because “it is the only written proof to date that Juan Carlos might have secretly been nostalgic for the kind of military rule that Franco had taught him to appreciate.”

In April 2012, a couple of months after these revelations, the king was photographed in hunting gear beside an elephant he had shot on an €8,000-a-day safari trip in Botswana—refuting the official story that he had fallen and broken his hip while working hard in his office. The episode exposed the lies that everyone was “pulling together” as a result of the austerity measures imposed following the 2008 economic crisis.

The king has also been affected by the Nóos corruption case involving his daughter, Princess Cristina Federica de Borbón. Her husband, Iñaki Urdangarin, is accused along

with his former business partner, Diego Torres, of tax fraud and siphoning money into offshore bank accounts and family companies, including the real estate agency Aizoon, co-owned by his wife.

Defence lawyers led by Miquel Roca—one of the architects of the 1978 Constitution—are claiming that Cristina had no knowledge of the goings-on and that Urdangarin is solely responsible.

Last week, the princess was named as a formal suspect in the case. Judge José Castro noted that she spent nearly €700,000 of Aizoon money on items such as dinnerware, trips, private dance lessons and the redecoration of a mansion in Barcelona.

The case is damaging the monarchy so much that every state institution has intervened in an attempt to protect the princess.

Last April, the Provincial Court of Palma de Mallorca blocked Castro's attempts to summon the princess, arguing that there was no legal basis to call a daughter of the Spanish king into court. In November, the Treasury sent the judge a report on Aizoon arguing that the amount owed was only €281,109 in four years and below the threshold for prosecution. In December, the anti-corruption attorney Pedro Horrach published a written document stating that "he did not see any elements to implicate Cristina de Borbón." The Royal Household has also put pressure on Castro, demanding he bring proceedings "to a timely conclusion."

Such is the importance of the monarchy's role as political "cement" holding together the Spanish state that the publicly funded Centre of Sociological Research (CIS) ended questions related to the king's popularity in its regular surveys once the monarchy's popularity fell below 5 out of 10 in 2011. After much pressure, the CIS reinstated the question in the May 2013 survey, only to find his popularity had plummeted to 3.7 out of 10. Since then, the question has, once again, been omitted.



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