

# Spanish media promotes far-right VOX party

Alejandro López and Paul Mitchell  
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Spain's far-right VOX party has been afforded massive media coverage since its rally last month of around 9,000 sympathizers at Madrid's Vistalegre Palace.

In the space of three weeks, *El Mundo* has published over 20 articles covering Vox. Spain's traditional conservative newspaper, *ABC*, which has backed every reactionary and right-wing regime in Spain since its foundation in 1903, posted 18 articles, favourable opinion pieces and an interview. *La Razón* has posted 11 articles. *El Español* has outdone them all, publishing 26 pieces since October 7—at least one a day.

VOX leaders took to the stage at Vistalegre to advocate 100 reactionary, anti-democratic measures. These include the suspension of Catalan regional autonomy, the banning of parties, associations and NGOs which “promote the destruction of [Spanish] territorial unity and its sovereignty,” the imposition of Spanish as the main language of instruction in schools and restrictions on the use of regional languages.

VOX wants to revoke the Historical Memory Law, which enforces limited measures relating to the crimes of the Franco dictatorship, close mosques, create a Family Ministry to promote the reactionary ideology of the Catholic Church, abolish the gender violence law, lower income and corporate tax, which will inevitably help the rich, and deport migrants.

Paraphrasing Trump, VOX General Secretary Ortega Smith demanded that “Spaniards come first,” adding, “Together we will make Spain great again.” Party President Santiago Abascal closed the rally, declaring, “A nation reacts when it has historical inertia, when there is blood coursing through its veins, and when it is aggravated, as Spain is being aggravated now.”

Since the Vistalegre rally, Abascal has been granted numerous interviews on Spain's main radio and television programmes. He was even interviewed on “A diario,” a sports programme on Radio Marca, which doesn't usually invite politicians.

VOX was launched in 2014 by former Popular Party (PP) members, the Terrorism Victims Association

(AVT)—a hotbed of the Spanish far-right—and the Defence of the Spanish Nation foundation (DENAES). Most of VOX's founding members come from families connected with the Franco dictatorship, the military, monarchy, big business and right-wing think tanks.

Six out of 10 people who say they would vote for VOX come from the PP and three from Citizens, a neo-liberal party which originated in Catalonia opposed to secession and became the largest party in the Catalan parliament in last December's election. It is now at around 20-25 percent in polls for Spain's next general elections (no later than July 2020), challenging the PP and Socialist Party (PSOE) for first place.

VOX is ratcheting up calls to defend the Spanish nation against Catalan and Basque nationalists, migrant workers and against the European Union. It has demanded a rewriting of Spain's constitution and for regional autonomy and regional parliaments to be scrapped.

Vox has all the hallmarks of a fascist party, shown by its lambasting of the PP during the Catalan secessionist crisis, claiming it was “dithering” over its response. The PP's “dithering,” supported by Citizens and the PSOE, was to take unprecedented police-state measures in Catalonia, before pulling back from a permanent police-military takeover of the region advocated by VOX.

The PP declared the October 2017 referendum illegal, suspended Catalan autonomy, sent in the paramilitary police to smash up polling stations and imprisoned Catalan ministers and officials on charges of sedition and rebellion. When independence was declared, VOX became the main promoter of the private legal court case launched against the secessionists. It demanded the maximum possible prison sentences for the imprisoned leaders.

VOX has no mass base. According to the latest polls by the state-funded CIS, the party would poll just 1.6 percent if Spanish national elections were called now and would be lucky to get one deputy in parliament. Even in polling for the European Union parliamentary elections next year, VOX, the only party to oppose the EU, can only muster

5.1 percent of the vote.

During the Catalan crisis, it staged pro-Spanish unity demonstrations with just a few hundred people, often sporting swastikas and giving fascist salutes. Nevertheless, the party was hyped by the media as the representative of “concerned citizens.” The PP and Citizens are also claiming the party’s growth represents citizens “concerned” with migration and Catalan nationalism and are exploiting this to shift their own political agenda further to the right.

Last Sunday, in a provocative meeting organised by Citizens and backed by the PP and VOX in the small Navarrese town of Alsasua, which follows similar ones in Catalonia, the right-wing politicians called for the defence of the state security force and the unity of Spain against the Catalan and Basque nationalists. The meeting was held to honour state security forces in the town where a 2016 bar brawl resulted in the injuries of off-duty civil guards and their partners.

Attending the meeting was Abascal for VOX, along with the police association Jusapol, the Association of the Victim of Terrorism and the Catalan Civil Society. The promotion of VOX, as with similar formations in every country, is the spearhead of the drive by the ruling class towards censorship, state repression and fascist methods to defend its rule.

There is deep, historically rooted opposition in the working class in Spain and internationally to fascism. However, to the extent that the working class remains subordinated to the PSOE and Podemos there is a real danger of VOX rising. In this, it is aided by the cowardice and complacency of the Socialist Party (PSOE) government.

Installed last June, the minority government, backed by the pseudo-left Podemos and regional nationalists, promised to end Rajoy’s austerity policies, boost public spending, end the expulsion of migrants, exhume the remains of former dictator Francisco Franco from his mausoleum and reach a negotiated settlement to the Catalan crisis. In practice, however, the PSOE imposed Rajoy’s austerity and militarist budget in June. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has made clear his readiness to abandon his limited spending increases in the 2019 budget, including a raise in the minimum wage, to get it through parliament.

The PSOE has continued the policy of mass expulsions of migrants who cross the border in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and coordinated raids on sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, resulting in the arrest of

thousands, banished to distant parts of the country, or expelled.

Last Thursday the government-controlled state attorney announced it would formally charge the Catalan secessionists with sedition, which carries a maximum penalty of 15 years. This is meant to be lenient compared to the 30 years of rebellion charges written up by the Public Prosecutors Office.

Such policies of accommodation to the right strengthen and embolden political forces like VOX.

Opposing the growth of far-right and fascist parties demands an uncompromising struggle against not only the social democrats, but also their pseudo-left and Stalinist allies. If anyone has illusions that Podemos will confront the fascists, one has only to examine the recent internal debate in which former Communist Party leader Julio Anguita, Podemos deputy Manuel Monereo and law professor Héctor Illuega—all close to General Secretary Pablo Iglesias—have published three articles hailing the Italian neo-fascist “Dignity Decree” as “a remarkable effort to defend the Italian people against the lords of finance.”

In a recent interview in *El Mundo*, Anguita said of immigration, “Do you believe that any European country, especially ours, can say: come all of you who want? ... Dear friend, can millions come? Let us face the facts. ... What is happening here has already happened in the history of mankind. Migration finished with the Roman Empire ...”

Such words could have been said by the fascist Abascal himself. Iglesias has not only refused to condemn Anguita, his one-time mentor. He offered him membership of the Council of State, the supreme consultative council of the Spanish government.



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