

Spain: Rightist parties mull government role for fascist Vox in Andalusia

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The speed with which the Popular Party (PP) and Citizens have moved towards incorporating the fascist Vox party into government in Andalusia is a warning to workers and youth across Spain and Europe.

The December 2 regional election was yet another devastating blow to the bipartisan political system created during the transition to parliamentary democracy following the death of dictator Generalísimo Francisco Franco in 1975.

The Socialist Party (PSOE) slumped from 47 seats in 2015 elections to 33, ending its 36 years of uninterrupted rule in the 109-seat assembly. The PP dropped from 33 in 2015 to 26 seats. The record abstention rate of almost 46 percent also indicates the widespread opposition to the traditional parties of government, the official “left” parties above all. Participation, the lowest since 1990, was especially low in the PSOE’s working-class heartlands, while the pseudo-left Stalinist Unidos Podemos front—Adelanta Andalucía—dropped from 20 in 2015 to 17 seats, losing 200,000 votes.

The electoral beneficiaries were the parties of the “new right.” Citizens increased its seats from seven to 21, while Vox, an explicitly Francoite party, won 12 seats and almost 11 percent of the vote compared to zero seats and 0.46 percent in 2015.

Vox will be the kingmaker in the formation of a new right-wing administration and will have huge influence, whether it is a coalition partner or supports a minority PP-Citizens government in a supply and confidence arrangement. PP leader Pablo Casado declared, “Whether it is an investiture agreement, a parliamentary agreement or a coalition government, we will have to first discuss with Citizens and Vox.” Citizens leader Albert Rivera warned the PSOE that if it keeps clinging onto power and refuses to accept a minority Citizens-PP government, he would have to make an agreement with Vox as a “last resort.”

The Andalusian result does not indicate a groundswell of support for right-wing policies. Citizens and Vox benefited rather from a transfer of votes away from the PP by the wealthier layers of the middle class. The *Guardian* noted

that in the prosperous neighbourhood of Los Remedios, the PP’s share of the vote fell in three years from 61 percent to 37.2 percent, while Vox’s rose from 3.2 percent to 24.7 percent.

The electoral success of the rightist parties was made possible primarily by the PSOE and its political ally Podemos demobilising widespread opposition in the working class to the previous PP government of Mariano Rajoy and its agenda of austerity, political repression and militarism—above all during last year’s independence crisis in Catalonia.

The PP was in power from 2015, but without a majority—forcing a second inconclusive snap election one year later—with the PP only able to form a government because the PSOE abstained. In 2017, the PP provoked a major confrontation with Catalan separatists, ordering a brutal police crackdown on the independence referendum and invoking Article 155 of the Spanish constitution to suspend Catalonia’s elected government, lock up its ministers and charge them with rebellion and sedition.

Substantial public opposition and the PP’s own weakness forced a retreat from the turn to all-out state repression demanded by Citizens and Vox—both of which are now challenging the PP for leadership of the rightist constituency within the population and the military and state apparatus.

The PSOE supported the PP’s repression, while Podemos dissipated opposition with initial pacifist-style “White” protests. Once they saw this was becoming a popular call, they called off the protests and sought to defuse deep-seated opposition to police-state measures by issuing bankrupt appeals to Madrid to negotiate with the Catalan separatists. The prevention of any unified offensive by Catalan-speaking and Spanish workers handed the post-crisis initiative to the advocates of sectarianism—with Citizens emerging as the largest party, the PP collapsing and the separatist parties forming a minority government following elections in December.

The PSOE could not save the PP’s skin indefinitely, and on June 1 a no confidence motion passed the national

legislature against Rajoy, by this time mired in corruption scandals. The fall of the PP government led to the formation of a PSOE minority government under Pedro Sanchez with the backing of Podemos and the Catalan and Basque nationalist parties.

Once in power, the PSOE and its backers again worked to hand the initiative back to the right-wing. Sanchez betrayed his pledge to implement an anti-austerity budget, drawn up in alliance with Podemos on the eve of the elections in Andalusia, and agreed to implement the budget drawn up by the PP.

The bourgeoisie used this situation to raise the profile of Vox. In the space of three weeks leading up to the Andalusian elections, Spain's traditional conservative newspaper *ABC* posted 18 articles, *El Mundo* over 20 and *El Español* 26 pieces—at least one a day. This legitimisation of Vox continues. Last week, media chiefs ordered their newsrooms to stop labeling Vox “ultra-right” and “extreme right” and to stop using the word antifascist when describing anti-Vox protests.

The promotion of Vox and similar parties across Europe and internationally, including the Alternative for Germany in Germany and National Rally (formerly National Front) in France, is the spearhead of a broader offensive against the working class in which far-right forces are being rehabilitated and police-state measures introduced.

Particularly since the 2008 financial crash, bourgeois democracy in Europe has begun to disintegrate amid rising social inequality and class and international tensions. This collapse of democratic forms of rule was symbolized by the European Union's consistent support for Madrid's crackdown last year in Catalonia.

As in Spain, the political basis for the rise of the fascist threat across Europe has been provided by the systematic demobilisation of workers and youth by social democracy, the trade unions and new “broad-left” parties like Syriza in Greece—created by alliances of Stalinists and pseudo-left groups. Representatives of the affluent middle class, they have all proven to be completely hostile to the working class and its social and democratic rights, and defenders of the bourgeois order.

Podemos's role as appendage of the PSOE has become even more craven after the Andalusian result—urging the formation of an “anti-fascist front” to cement their alliance with Sanchez. But this is not the limit as to how far to the right Podemos will travel. Asked about the possibility of taking part in a government alliance involving Citizens to curb the influence of Vox, Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias said, “We are studying the scenarios... We have to analyze the results.” Whether this involves an electoral alliance with Citizens “will be decided by our comrades in Andalusia,

who are the ones who have all the sovereignty to decide what is done,” he continued.

Forty years after the Francoite regime collapsed amid mass struggles of the working class, there is deep opposition among workers in Spain and across Europe to a return to fascism.

The bloody 1936–1939 Spanish Civil War and the victory of Franco's fascist regime with military aid from Nazi Germany and fascist Italy are not forgotten. The Andalusian result prompted demonstrations of thousands of youth chanting, “VOX, listen, we are ready to fight,” “Franco has not died, he is in Parliament” and “Andalusia is no place for fascism.” Protests also took place in Catalonia, which were attacked by the regional police.

This takes place under conditions where workers are seeking to break out of the straitjacket placed on them by the trade unions—with a series of strikes erupting across Spain in transport, retail, the postal service and in public health care, social services and education. Last month hundreds of thousands of workers and students participated in demonstrations and strikes in Catalonia demanding the budget cuts imposed by the regional government be reversed.

This reflects a radicalisation of the working class epitomised in the Yellow Vest protests against the Macron government in France.

The critical question is to provide the working class with the programmatic and organisational means through which to fight back against the ruling elite, its parties and its state apparatus. After a decade of austerity policies, with tens of millions unemployed, there is explosive social and political anger across the continent. The only way to combat the strategy of the ruling class, which reacts with police build-ups and states of emergency, is through a revolutionary struggle for power on a socialist, internationalist programme and the building of workers states as part of the United Socialist States of Europe.



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