

Spain's far-right Vox party backs right-wing coalition government in Andalusia

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The far-right Vox party has agreed to back the bid of the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and Citizens (Cs) to rule Andalusia, the second-largest and most populous region in Spain. This marks the first time a far-right party promoting the legacy of fascist dictator Francisco Franco has helped form a government in Spain since the Francoite dictatorship fell 40 years ago. The deal is poised to end 36 years of uninterrupted Socialist Party (PSOE) rule in the region and sets a precedent for a possible national coalition government between PP, Citizens and Vox.

PP's Manuel Moreno is to become the new regional premier, despite having obtained the PP's worst-ever electoral results in the region. An investiture debate is scheduled for this week.

Last week, Vox agreed to support a PP-Cs government—dropping its calls to expel 52,000 migrants, repeal laws on gender violence and gender equality, and scrap LGBT anti-discrimination policies. After obtaining widespread media coverage based on these demands, Vox then renounced them. Its leader, Santiago Abascal, had committed the party to an alliance with the PP and Cs soon after the elections, stressing that Vox would not be “an obstacle to political change in Andalusia.”

Other points in Vox's 100-issue manifesto included abolishing the 17 regions to recentralize Spain as under Franco, outlawing separatist parties, slashing taxes, and banning undocumented migrants.

Right-wing newspapers welcomed the deal. *El Español* cheered Vox's “exercise of pragmatism,” and *El Mundo* defined the agreement as reflecting Vox's “wisdom of consensus.” The ultra-Catholic *La Razón* rejoiced that Vox “has renounced their most extreme demands.”

The government programme combines the promotion

of the legacy of Francisco Franco, the fascist butcher of the Spanish Civil War, the defense of the wealth of the financial aristocracy, and appeals to nationalism and anti-Muslim hatred. It includes a “concord law” to replace the region's Historical Memory Law, which condemns Franco's regime and allows for exhumations of the remains of victims of the fascists in the Civil War.

The agreement is an unabashed defense of the banks' austerity diktat. It calls for slashing income tax, estate tax and inheritance tax. The estate tax is only paid by 17,700 people (0.2 percent of the population), while inheritance tax is only paid by those inheriting over 1 million euros. The indebted region will thereby reduce its income, providing a pretext for even more social cuts. The regional government will audit its expenditure to cut “superfluous” spending, eliminate subsidies that do “not meet obvious public and social purposes” and de-fund the public media.

The agreement also opens the door to attacks on public education, asserting “freedom and the right of parents to choose the model they wish for their children, avoiding any interference by public authorities in the ideological formation of students.”

Appealing to the ultra-Catholic sections of the population, the agreement calls for tax incentives to families to drive up the birth rate, the creation of a Family Ministry and forcing women with unwanted pregnancies to receive “extra information” to dissuade them from having abortions. It calls for promoting flamenco and Holy Week celebrations, protecting bullfighting as “a source of wealth and jobs,” and changing Andalusia's regional day to commemorate the end of the Christian reconquest of Spain, and the start of the expulsion of Muslims and Jews, in 1492.

The agreement calls for a mass crackdown on

immigrants, calling on the State Security Forces to “protect borders, guaranteeing an orderly, legal immigration, respectful of our western culture.”

The far-right victory in the Andalusian election is a devastating verdict on the bankruptcy and the reactionary role of the PSOE and Podemos. Participation was the lowest since 1990, especially in working class areas traditionally voting for the PSOE. Forward Andalusia, an electoral coalition formed by Podemos Andalusia and the Stalinist-led United Left, lost 200,000 votes—dropping from 20 seats in 2015 to 17.

The PSOE received its worst-ever result of 28 per cent after slashing education, health and social spending at the national and regional levels. After its 36-year rule, and the worst capitalist crisis since the 1930s, over a quarter of Andalusia’s population is unemployed; tens of thousands depend on the Minimum Social Rent subsidy of €400. Nearly 42 percent of Andalusians live at risk of social exclusion.

In the six months of PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez’s rule from Madrid, the government has continued the austerity and militarist policies of its PP predecessor and its repression of Catalan nationalist political prisoners.

The PSOE has reacted to Vox’s victory by shifting further to the right. PSOE regional candidate Susana Díaz blamed her defeat on the lack of Catalan-bashing during her campaign. PSOE regional premier of Castilla-La Mancha, Emiliano García-Page, raised the prospect of banning all secessionist parties.

The speed with which the PP and Cs have moved towards incorporating the fascist programme of Vox is a warning to workers and youth across Spain and Europe. The leader of the PP, Pablo Casado, has already said that the agreement in Andalusia is a “preamble of what will happen in May in Spain,” referring to local and regional elections.

Vox’s fascist programme does not enjoy mass support. Like other far-right parties in Europe, Vox is acquiring influence far beyond its actual strength, based on support not in the population, but in the ruling class, the army, and other capitalist parties.

It was founded in December 2013 by ex-PP members who wanted the PP government to take a harder line for pro-business tax policies and against Basque and Catalan nationalists and migration. They contested the

2014 elections but failed to win seats. Today most Vox voters are rich or upper middle class former PP voters.

The Spanish ruling class used the Catalan crisis of October 2017 to catapult Vox to prominence. A marginal party until the fall of 2017, it received widespread coverage based on its extreme anti-Catalan rhetoric and demonstrations. It only obtained 395,978 votes in Andalusia (10.97 percent), four mayors out of 8,122, 17 town councilors out of 67,611 and 12 seats in the Andalusian parliament out of 109. Nevertheless, it has set the tone since the Andalusian elections, as the ruling elite in Spain—as across Europe—tries to channel growing political discontent in a fascistic direction.

The central obstacle in mobilizing the broad, historically rooted opposition in the Spanish working class to Francoism and the far right is the reactionary role of what passes for the “left” in Spain. Committed to the capitalist “Transition” regime they built to strangle the revolutionary upsurge of the working class against the Francoite regime in the 1970s, they are determined opponents of a revolutionary and internationalist struggle of the working class for socialism. This leaves the road open for the right to exploit widespread anger against the PSOE and Podemos.

Podemos’ calls to pressure the PSOE to the left at national and regional levels have been exposed as a fraud. Even where it has ruled in the so-called “local governments of change,” like in the Andalusian city of Cádiz, Podemos has only imposed austerity budgets and supported local industry’s weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, claiming this “creates jobs.”

They aligned themselves on the PP’s and PSOE’s ruthless crackdown on Catalonia and Catalan political prisoners.

Podemos and its pseudo-left allies are strangling the rising discontent expressed in several protests against Vox since the elections, by promoting identity politics in order to divide the working class. Podemos number two Irene Montero called on women to “fill the streets and ballots” to stop Vox.



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