Spain’s fascist Vox party enlists former generals, calls for banning Marxist parties

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This week, the deputy secretary of international relations of the Spanish far-right party Vox, Iván Espinosa de los Monteros, declared that the “ultraleft and [Catalan and Basque] nationalism are the enemies of Spain” and that “between us all we have to finish them off.” He said that Vox would propose outlawing parties that “don’t believe in the unity of Spain and those who don’t renounce Marxism.”

Vox has signed up five former generals to run in the April 28 general elections. Two have publicly defended the legacy of fascist dictator Francisco Franco.

Vox’s policies are openly anti-democratic and reactionary. They include suspending all regional governments, reversing limited measures that sought to address Franco’s crimes, closing mosques, bolstering the Catholic Church, lowering income and corporate tax, and deporting migrants.

Former Navy General Agustin Rosety Fernandez de Castro will head the Vox list in the southern province of Cadiz. Rosety, who served the Spanish army for 40 years under Popular Party (PP) and Socialist Party (PSOE) administrations as Chief of Special Operations, head of the Ministry of Defence’s top body—the General Directorate of Defence Policy—has revealed his true colours.

So too has former General of Division Alberto Asarta who will stand in Castellon. He is the author of the current Spanish Air Force military doctrine and has taken part in Spanish imperialist wars and interventions, leading the Multinational Brigade Plus Ultra II in Iraq and UNIFIL in Lebanon.

Both Rosety and Asarta signed last year’s pro-fascist manifesto “Declaration of Respect to General Francisco Franco Bahamonde, Soldier of Spain,” along with 670 other top current and retired officers. Published in the pro-Francoite Asociación de Militares Españoles (AME-Association of Spanish Soldiers), it proclaimed Franco, who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of workers during the Spanish Civil War and founded a 40-year fascist dictatorship, to be the saviour of Spain.

Rosety and Asarta will be joined by former Air Force General Manuel Mestre Barea, who fought in Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iraq and will stand in Alicante. Former General Fulgencio Coll, who will be the candidate for mayor for Palma de Mallorca, was chief of staff of the Spanish Army between 2008 and 2012. General Antonio Budiño Carballo, who oversaw operations in Croatia, Albania and Iraq, will stand in Pontevedra.

The decision of top Spanish officers to hail fascist crimes, join Vox, and run for parliament is a warning to workers in Spain and beyond. As the French army threatens to shoot “yellow vest” protesters, the financial aristocracy everywhere is moving towards fascistic military-police regimes.

This lays bare the claim that the Spanish army was “democratised” after the fall of the Francoite regime. Rather, in line with events across Europe, the transition to bourgeois democracy under the slogan of “forgive and forget” covered up the crimes of the fascists, allowed them to continue their careers unhindered and incubate their successors. The state is deliberately building up the Vox party. It was created by former hard-line PP politicians, appealing directly to the military, the judiciary and the police.

These forces exploited the Catalan nationalists’ calling of an independence referendum to shift the political atmosphere far to the right and legitimize the building of an openly pro-fascist party.

Polls show that Vox does not draw support from the working class. Most if its voters are former PP supporters and middle-class layers earning over €2,000

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a month. Only 13 percent of Spanish citizens earn this amount.

Last December, after massive media promotion, the party came from virtually nowhere to win 12 seats in the 108-seat Andalusian parliament and almost 11 percent of the vote. It then became the kingmaker, deciding to back a right-wing Citizens-PP coalition government in the region.

Vox could again be in a position to broker a right-wing government after the national elections in April. According to the latest polls, the party could win 10.3 percent of the vote, or 20 to 23 seats in the 350-seat parliament. Combined with the PP and Citizens the right wing could end up with at least 176 seats—a slim majority over the PSOE and Unidos Podemos.

Espinosa de los Monteros' threat to ban Marxist parties is also a warning. Amid growing strikes and social protests in neighbouring Portugal and France, and across Europe, Spain's ruling class is aware of broad opposition to the PSOE and Podemos on their left, from the working class.

After 36 years of uninterrupted rule in Andalucía, the PSOE suffered its worst-ever defeat—its number of seats dropped from 47 to 33—whilst Unidos Podemos lost three of its 20 seats, torpedoing claims it would substantially increase its vote.

Podemos is not a Marxist party. It is rapidly being exposed as a pseudo-left populist party of the affluent middle class, representing social layers somewhat excluded from the two-party patronage system installed after the collapse of the Franco regime. A regional representative in Andalucía receives a salary of €3,127 a month plus extra money for serving on committees or for being a party spokesperson and travel expenses up to €500 a month.

The fact that Vox and the army feel emboldened to hail Franco, a fascist mass murderer, and call for banning Marxism, is due above all to the reactionary role of the PSOE—which promoted most of these officers to become generals—and of Podemos.

Since its foundation five years ago, Podemos has claimed that the only "realistic" policy to defend the "people" was to integrate itself in the state apparatus and appeal to the ruling class. During these years, general secretary Pablo Iglesias assiduously courted bankers, representatives of big business (including with a trip to Wall Street), and military and police associations.

Podemos has formed coalition governments at a regional and local level (where it helped impose austerity). Iglesias pleaded with the PSOE to continue this policy at a national level and include Podemos in a "Government of Change."

Last June, Podemos was finally able to install a PSOE-led government through backdoor talks with the regional nationalist parties to oust the PP government. Within two weeks, the farce of a "progressive government programme" with the PSOE, Spain's main party of capitalist rule since 1978, was exposed. PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced he would comply with EU austerity and execute the budget passed by the PP.

In the ensuing eight months until it fell last month, the Podemos-backed PSOE government pursued an agenda indistinguishable from that of the PP. It has continued prosecuting imprisoned Catalan nationalist leaders.

Now, the PSOE has opened the door to the most right-wing, law-and-order campaign in Spain's modern history, centred on the Catalan separatist question and migration. As the daily *El País* noted, "the economy has gone into the background to the detriment of more populist messages, the Catalan question or the dust cloud unleashed by the eruption of Vox. Everyone admits that in this campaign the economic debate will be minimized despite the serious threats of slowdown and the long list of pending tasks in the economic field. There is hardly talk of cuts, austerity or tax increases."

The unstated target of this campaign, however, is the working class. Whichever coalition is formed after the elections, whether one led by the right wing with the backing of Vox, or a PSOE-led government supported by Citizens or Podemos, it will rapidly move against the workers.

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