

Ahead of ruling in Catalan show trials

Catalan nationalists, Spanish unions and pseudo-left demobilize opposition

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12 October 2019

Spain's Supreme Court is set to convict 12 Catalan nationalist politicians Monday over their role in the independence referendum of October 1, 2017. These politicians have been fraudulently charged for instigating protests with the aim of violently seceding from Spain. It is expected they will be sentenced to years in prison.

Such a ruling would be a major escalation in the attack on democratic rights, including freedom of thought and of assembly, with the most serious consequences for social opposition in the working class. It would mean that political prisoners would again be present in Spanish jails—a situation not seen since the fall of the fascist dictatorship under General Francisco Franco. Human rights groups denounced “serious irregularities” in the trial; the International Federation for Human Rights concluded that it “didn’t offer the minimum guarantees to be qualified as fair.”

Terrified of possible mass protests and strikes, acting Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez’s government is mobilizing the police and preparing mass repression. It is moving Civil Guard anti-riot units to Catalonia. It aims to strengthen Civil Guard units already in Catalonia with 700 extra Civil Guards and 800 National Police officers. In addition, Madrid has ordered the mobilization of 300 troops of the Grupo de Acción Rápido (Rapid Action Force)—a unit deployed in war zones and conflict areas like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Haiti and Lebanon.

On Wednesday, General Pedro Garrido, the leader of the Civil Guard in Catalonia, violated the military code forbidding uniformed troops from publicly discussing politics to threaten the public. He said the Civil Guards had showed their “commitment to Spain” two years

ago, when they savagely beat peaceful voters in the October 1, 2017 Catalan independence referendum, leaving over 1,000 injured. He added, “Every time it may be necessary, we will do it again.”

Sánchez has warned he may invoke the National Security Law and Article 155 of the Constitution before elections called for November 11, to suspend Catalonia’s elected regional government. In this, he has been directly assisted by Unidas Podemos party, whose leader Pablo Iglesias has pledged to support applying Article 155 of the Constitution. The Stalinist CCOO (Workers Commissions) union and the social-democratic General Labor Union (UGT) have opposed all strike action against the Catalan show trials. Instead, they passed over them in silence.

Amid this onslaught of the Spanish bourgeoisie and political establishment, the Catalan nationalists and trade unions are doing everything they can to demobilize opposition to the court ruling and subordinate it to their bankrupt, pro-capitalist and nationalist perspective.

The Catalan nationalist parties, the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) and Together for Catalonia (JxCat), whose officials including former ERC vice-premier Oriol Junqueras are among the accused in the show trials, are preparing to violently crack down on protests called in their own defense. The regional government under their control has activated Operation Minerva, which makes all regional anti-riot police available to suppress protests. The Catalan government also recently restocked the police with a new supply of pepper spray.

The Catalan-nationalist Catalan National Assembly (ANC) and the Òmnium association are bourgeois

groups linked to the ERC and JxCat by a thousand threads; they make clear they will not appeal to workers across Spain, among whom there is deep opposition to violent repression of the Catalans. One poll found that despite relentless anti-Catalan media propaganda, three-fifths of Spaniards oppose a confrontation between Madrid and the Catalan population.

Nonetheless, the ANC and Òmnium are working feverishly to ensure that the show trial ruling leads only to temporary, spontaneous and uncoordinated protests.

After months of silence and inactivity, the Catalan National Assembly, whose former leader Jordi Sànchez has been in preventive detention for two years, proposed a “spontaneous” one-time response to the ruling, to suddenly bring Catalonia to a standstill. They wrote on Twitter: “If you’re at home or at work, go into the street and protest! If you’re in your car, stop it and make yourself heard!” The ANC is calling gatherings at 8 p.m. that day at some locations.

These actions will occur alongside the Marches for Liberty co-organised with the pro-separatist Òmnium association, whose former leader Jordi Cuixart is also in preventive detention. Planned to last three days, they are to start in Berga, Vic, Girona, Tàrraga and Tarragona, and arrive in Barcelona on Friday lunchtime.

ANC leader Elisenda Paluzie has also made clear that the ANC intends to dissipate the protests and keep a tight leash on actions by the so-called Committees for the Defence of the Republic (CDR), linked to the petty-bourgeois Candidatures of Popular Unity (CUP) party. On Radio 4, she spoke of the need for protests but opposed action “lasting more than one month.” This she said, would “wear out” the nationalist movement. She distanced herself from CDR protest actions like “roadblocks or blocking toll booths.”

The tiny Catalan-nationalist trade unions, Intersindical-CSC and Intersindical Alternativa de Catalunya, with a combined membership of less than 8,000, have called for a 24-hour strike Friday, for an end to “political repression in Catalonia.” The unions have advanced nationalist demands, like for a minimum salary of 1,200 euros in Catalonia, making no appeal to workers outside the region.

The various pseudo-left political satellites of Podemos and the Catalan nationalist CUP, for their part, have endorsed these calls. The Workers’

Revolutionary Current, the Spanish section of the Morenoite Trotskyist Fraction—Fourth International and Revolutionary Left, the Spanish affiliate of the Committee for a Workers’ International, have praised the nationalist unions for calling these strikes in their statements, and called for the Catalan nationalist forces to intensify their calls for separation and the creation of a Catalan republic.

The inability of the petty-bourgeois groups, the unions and the Catalan nationalists to make even an elementary appeal to workers in Spain and internationally, in their own defense, underscores their political bankruptcy. They are barely disguised satellites of the Spanish ruling elite. The only way forward for workers seeking to mount political opposition to the Spanish police state is to organize on the basis of an independent socialist program from these bankrupt groups.



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