Far-right Vox party to launch fascist trade union in Spain

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Amid growing social opposition of the working class against the Socialist Party-Podemos government and its affiliated trade unions, Workers Commissions (CCOO) and the General Union of Labour (UGT), Spain's far-right Vox has announced it will create a new trade union in September.

The call is a warning to the working class. Vox—the third largest political party in parliament with 50 seats, heavily promoted by the media, and with strong connections to the Spanish military, police and intelligence services—is build a nationalist organization to strangle opposition among workers.

According to Vox leader Santiago Abascal, this union "will protect workers, their families, our neighborhoods, and industry," and "it will not kneel before the powerful or the communist nomenclature", and will not be "at the service of the left and its globalist interests", in reference to Podemos and the PSOE. The union will aim to represent "all Spaniards and not to force a non-existent class struggle."

Vox spokersperson Jorge Buxadé, a former member of the Falange—Spain's main party group during the 1930s, which became the sole legal party under the fascist dictatorship of General Francisco Franco from 1939 to 1977— accused the CCOO and UGT unions of not defending workers' rights. He reiterated that the new organization "will not be class-based."

He stated that in a time of economic crisis and rising unemployment, the trade union "have lost themselves in many rights that are useless", in reference to identity politics, "and have forgotten the only right that really matters is the right to work." The Spanish unions "have not defended the workers from Airbus, Nissan or Alcoa", companies implementing thousands of job cuts.

To distance the new organisation from the current unions, funded to the tune of billions of euros by the state and the employers, Buxadé claimed the new organisation will be "funded by its members."

The calculations of the fascists are very clear.

The global economy faces its worst recession since the 1930s, whose effects are yet to be seen. The IMF predicts the Spanish economy will fall 12 to 18 percent this year, the worst fall since the Spanish Civil War. Its public deficit will grow from 2.8 percent in 2019, after social spending was decimated by a decade of savage austerity, to 13.9 percent. Unemployment is expected to grow to 20 to 25 percent of the working population by the end of the year. Intermón Oxfam estimates that 700,000 would fall into poverty, which could affect 26 percent of the population.

In the interests of the financial aristocracy, the PSOE-Podemos government is preparing to implement draconian austerity, with billions of euros of cuts in health care, education and pensions. Spain's central bank insists Spain must cut €6 billion a year, impose new "structural reforms" to pensions—cuts and delaying further the age of retirement—and increase VAT, which overwhelmingly affects the working class.

The PSOE-Podemos government has already passed a €100 billion bank and corporate bailout, the largest in Spanish history.

It is widely understood among workers and by Vox that the UGT and CCOO support the PSOE and Podemos government and will not oppose such measures, which will provoke explosive social anger.

The unions have supported all of the PSOE-Podemos recent measures. They recently endorsed the labour reform first passed by the right-wing Popular Party, and CCOO General Secretary Unai Sordo recently ruled out taxing the wealthy: "Raising taxes only for the upper classes is not enough, you have to tell the people." The unions have also been the main enforcers of back-to-work orders amid the pandemic, risking the lives of millions of workers for corporate profits.

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The unions also refused to oppose the PSOE-Podemos government's mounting repression of workers. They did not lift a finger when the PSOE and Podemos unleashed riot police against strikes by steelworkers and protests by Glovo delivery workers against unsafe working conditions. They also kept silent when the government banned protests and rallies, cynically arguing that health considerations had to prevail over the right to protest—while sending millions of workers back to work amid the pandemic.

Anticipating the further growth of social opposition to the government and the unions, Vox aims to build an organization to whip up nationalism, divide the workers, and—when necessary—physically attack strikers.

This development should be taken as a warning. It confirms two key analyses the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has made of the growth of the far-right.

First, Vox, like other far-right parties internationally, does not reflect widespread fascistic sentiments in the population. It is driven from above, by forces in the media, the state, the military-police apparatus. It has benefitted from endless media promotion of Spanish nationalism and police repression in Catalonia.

Vox is aware of its own vulnerability. Its constituency is still overwhelmingly the middle class, security forces and traditional right-wing Catholic groups.

According to a latest poll, Vox's overall support is in fact decreasing. It has gone from 15 percent to 13 percent. Since the pandemic began, Vox has supported the big banks, private education and healthcare, cuts in public pensions, the pharmaceutical companies, the electricity companies and tax cuts on high incomes. In addition, it has defended unpopular company bailouts, while attacking those received by poor workers.

In recent weeks, however, it has intensified its cynical attempts to tap into rising social anger at the PSOE-Podemos government and the unions. Vox has begun agitating for the defence of "national" products and companies against foreign capital and scapegoating migrant workers. Vox has also attempted to posture as opposing the plant closures announced by automaker Nissan and aluminium producer Alcoa.

Moreover, the struggle against the far-right requires a Marxist internationalist perspective. Keeping the ruling class from promoting fascistic forces requires building, an international socialist movement opposing Podemos and similar "left populist" parties on the left—mobilizing opposition among workers internationally to inequality, authoritarianism and war on a socialist basis.

Social-democratic and Stalinist unions cannot seriously struggle against, let alone defeat fascist unions. Rooted in a nationalist and pro-capitalist perspective, they responded to the globalization of production with a decades-long collaboration with management to drive down workers' living standards. In every country, workers struggles have faced sabotage by the unions, who have done everything they can to divide workers along national lines. These conditions paved the way for Vox's advance.

Podemos' integration in a PSOE-led government has demonstrated that the "left populist" parties of the affluent class neither can nor will oppose the rise of far-right parties. Indeed, they are the fifth wheel of the bourgeoisie's turn to fascistic forms of rule. Terrified at rising strikes and protests, Podemos is working with the PSOE to pass anti-democratic measures to strangle political opposition.

Podemos leader and Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias praised Vox's nationalism, telling the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* in a recent interview that "in times of crisis it is normal to re-evaluate national sovereignty," as Vox does. He added that "the extreme right has understood this debate" but complained that "it gives answers that are not democratic."

The struggle against Vox requires the building of a new political leadership in the working class: sections of the ICFI in Spain and across Europe. None of the problems of militarism, EU austerity, the COVID-19 pandemic and the national conflicts whipped up by the bourgeoisie can be solved in a national, capitalist framework. The way forward is a fight to unify struggles of the working class across Europe and beyond in opposition to capitalism and imperialism.

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