

Podemos denies mounting danger of fascist military coup in Spain

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Amid the explosive political crisis in Spain caused by revelations of widespread calls for a fascist coup in the Spanish officer corps, Podemos leader and Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias finally broke his silence Thursday on the matter—but only to insist that the fascist coup plots do not pose any threat.

This is a politically criminal attempt by Podemos to lull workers and youth to sleep in the face of the rising danger of fascism. The day before, *Infolibre* had leaked WhatsApp chats of a group of dozens of retired top air force officers who proclaimed their loyalty to Spanish fascist dictator Francisco Franco, denounced the left, boasted of close links to the general staff, and called to massacre the Spanish people. Retired Major General Francisco Beca repeatedly called for mass murder to “extirpate the cancer,” writing: “I think what I’m missing is to shoot 26 million people!!!!!!”

The night before Iglesias intervened, retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel José Ignacio Domínguez, a former participant in the chat group, went on the radio programme *Hora 25*. He warned, “there has been and there exists a movement for a *pronunciamiento*”, that is, an attempt to shift politics to the right by threatening a coup. Speaking of the participants in the chat, Domínguez added: “They are not monarchists or constitutionalists, they are Francoists and they defend dictatorship. I’m not only talking about the past ones, but the future ones. They aspire to a dictatorship.”

On Thursday morning, however, Iglesias gave a prime-time interview on TVE1 state television to brazenly insist that nothing of any importance had been revealed. He said, “What these gentlemen say, at their age and already retired, in a chat with a few too many drinks, does not pose any threat.”

Iglesias tried to reassure the public that WhatsApp messages are “not representative of our armed forces.” This had been contradicted the night before by Lieutenant

Colonel Domínguez, who reported that fascism is alive and well in the Spanish army: “The Franco regime continues to have a large presence in the army, and Franco continues to be a respected figure.”

Nonetheless, Iglesias insisted that the threats from the officers in the WhatsApp group have no practical significance: “If they had done this while they were in active duty, obviously, it would have had disciplinary consequences, but there they would not have done it.”

Iglesias claimed that this was because they lacked “the guts” to agitate for a coup when on active duty. To support this grotesque argument, Iglesias cited the authority of another leading Podemos member, retired Air Force General and Chief of the Defence Staff Julio Rodríguez. Rodríguez, Iglesias claimed, had told him that “some of those who now say atrocities while they were in the army were sucking up to anyone in order to continue rising [in the ranks].”

Iglesias’ argument trivializing fascist support in the army is shot through with contradictions. If these officers long supported a fascist coup but did not have the “guts” for it, and instead spend their time “sucking up” to the general staff, this only raises the question: Why do these officers now believe that calling for a fascist coup is a good way of “sucking up” to the general staff and the ruling class?

In fact, powerful forces in Spanish bourgeois politics are spreading and legitimizing appeals to the king to support a coup. Indeed, while Iglesias and Podemos were maintaining a confused silence after *Infolibre*’s revelations, the fascist Vox party was openly defending the officers’ obscene and fascistic WhatsApp chats in the Congress. Hailing the officers calling for the mass murder of 26 million Spaniards as fighting for “the unity of Spain,” Vox lawmaker Macarena Olona declared: “Of course they are our people.”

Beca was the lead signatory of a group of 39 retired air

force officers who wrote to Spanish King Felipe VI to denounce the elected Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government. This came after another similar letter from 73 top retired army officers, parts of which were published in *El País*. These officers have now circulated a new letter, again denouncing a government of “communists” and stressing their “oath to defend the integrity of Spain and the constitutional order, giving our lives if necessary.”

Iglesias is covering up for fascist coup plotting because the PSOE-Podemos government itself has effectively been exposed as criminal. It implemented a “herd immunity” policy on Covid-19, imposing a return to work and school that left over 65,000 dead and 1.5 million infected in Spain. At the same time, as joblessness and hunger mount, Iglesias is joining a commission handing out billions of euros in EU bailout funds to the banks and corporations.

Iglesias knows a movement in the working class against the threat of a fascist coup would also enter into struggle against his own government. He is therefore making himself complicit in the fascist coup threat, desperately trying to hide it from the public.

Millions of Twitter users made the retired generals’ fascist messages one of Twitter’s main trending topics on Tuesday. On Wednesday, this was followed by the trending hashtag #YoSoyDeLos26Millones (I am one of the 26 million), in which tens of thousands commented. Thousands more denounced the king for remaining silent. There were many references to Franco’s fascist coup in 1936, the three-year Spanish Civil War that ensued, and the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of left-wing workers by the fascist Francoite regime at the war’s end.

One Twitter user said: “I would also be one of the first. Like my grandfather. He was shot just because he liked to speak and participate in politics. Just like I do. He continues to chew dirt in his mass grave.”

Another said: “I am one of the 26 million people that are not going to allow this happen again. They will have us in front.”

Iglesias waited in silence for four days after the first publication of one of the fascist officers’ letters in *El País*, when anger was boiling over on social media, before taking a public position on the issue. It is self-evident that his mission was to dampen mounting outrage among workers and youth.

Iglesias in his interview promoted the regime and especially the king, who has yet to disavow the letters, disclose the signatories or reveal other coup appeals he

has received. Iglesias said: “I don’t have the slightest doubt that he won’t even read the letter.” He blamed the WhatsApp group for putting the king “in an absurdly uncomfortable situation ... If some Francoite gentlemen think that by associating the head of state with Francoism they are doing him a favor, I think they do not understand that this contributes to more and more Spaniards feeling republican.”

These are more lies. Firstly, King Felipe and Iglesias himself are no doubt intensively reading the letters fascist officers are sending. Iglesias sits on the board running Spain’s National Intelligence Centre (CNI), one of whose main purposes is to monitor the army’s coup plots. It is known that the CNI identified and stopped coup plots by the Spanish army in 1982, 1985, and 2006. There can be little doubt that the CNI is now reporting on the fascist officers to Iglesias and other government officials.

Moreover, if Iglesias is unhappy that the Francoite officers are putting the king in an “uncomfortable” position, it is not that he fears a movement to make Spain into a Republic. His fear is that the threat of military-fascist dictatorship will provoke an eruption in the working class of strikes and protests and the development of a political movement against fascism. This would inevitably threaten the interests of the financial oligarchy he defends.

These events are an irrefutable vindication of the International Committee of the Fourth International’s (ICFI) analysis of the reactionary role of pseudo-left middle class parties like Podemos. These parties have completed their integration into the military-intelligence establishment. The critical task in the struggle against the pandemic and the danger of dictatorship is the construction of sections of the ICFI in Spain and internationally, to lead a struggle for a political break with Podemos and all of its political satellites, who are implicated in Iglesias’ manoeuvres.



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