

Active-duty Spanish officers hail retired officers' fascist calls for mass murder

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Spain's online daily *Público* has released fascistic chat messages from a WhatsApp group of 121 active-duty officers from the IX Artillery Promotion. These messages support fascist retired officers who on WhatsApp hailed Spain's fascist dictator, Francisco Franco, and called for a political genocide of 26 million people—anyone related by blood to voters for the ruling social-democratic Socialist Party (PSOE) and “left populist” Podemos party. This comes as videos emerge of Spanish soldiers singing fascist and neo-Nazi songs and making the fascist salute.

These chats also expose the false claims of Podemos general secretary and Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias as he downplays and covers up fascist sentiment in the officer corps. After the retired officers' WhatsApp chats were revealed, Iglesias gave a prime-time television speech dismissing the chats as irrelevant, since they came from non-active-duty personnel: “What these gentlemen say, at their age and already retired, in a chat with a few too many drinks, does not pose any threat.”

It is now clear that the retired officers spoke for fascist sentiment that is rife within the entire officer corps, including among those on active duty. The latest chat leaked by *Público* starts with officer Alberto Vázquez sending an article from far-right online daily *esdiario.es*. The article accuses Colonel José Ignacio Domínguez, a former participant in the retired officers' chat group, of having leaked the chats to *Infolibre* and being related to Iglesias.

Vázquez adds, “I trust that in this chat there is no S.O.B. traitor who denounces his colleagues in the worst manners like this *chequista* [fascist term for communist], without values or camaraderie. A private chat is private, in which you can say whatever you want, without anyone having to wait for a favour or

fear of arbitrariness from anyone. We use our individual rights and freedoms, which have nothing to do with the respect that as military men we have for the constitution and the laws, unlike this mob that twists them at will to terminate the nation and the King.”

An officer identifying himself as Membrilla responds with a sticker of a gunner with his thumb raised, to which Vázquez responds, referring to Colonel Domínguez: “I wonder how this guy who is in the military, high ranking, minimally educated and cultured, at seventy years old, can be a communist? Communism is the most genocidal political system invented by man, the most annihilating of human freedom, the [system] most against God and men that we have ever seen.”

After this anti-communist rant, other active soldiers intervene to show their support for the fascist retired officers, the content of their chats and attacking the alleged whistle-blower Domínguez.

Burgos cynically asks, “where is the data protection law, if a private chat can be violated?” Albert Vázquez replies, “Under the rat's hair bun.” Iglesias is well known for wearing his long hair in a bun, and *Público* notes that far right groups have manipulated social media links so that searches for “hunchbacked rat” in Spanish return Iglesias in the top search results.

Burgos—whom *Público* identifies as Second Lieutenant Gabriel Burgos Sánchez, currently in reserve but not retired—then supports the retired officers' fascist WhatsApp messages, issuing a series of attacks on the Podemos-PSOE government typically used by fascist Vox party in parliament.

He accuses the Spanish government of overstating the COVID-19 pandemic, bemoaning “a Prime Minister [Pedro Sánchez] lying with death figures,” and denounces Podemos: “Pablo Iglesias allows himself the

luxury of attacking the Monarchy, rejoicing the beating up of a policeman ...” Burgos adds: “And they dare to attack a chat group when they ignore the feelings of many facing this attack and a world turned upside down by the evil ones? Gentlemen, this was always Communism!!!”

Burgos added, “I consider everything to be an insult to all of us. They are coming to tell us: ‘you’re stupid Giving your whole life to defend your country when we don’t care.’”

Eventually, the chat members became concerned that these messages might be leaked publicly, as their fascist rants are opposed by the overwhelming majority of workers and youth. Garcia wrote, “we have to be more careful,” accompanying his text with the fascist salute and a cuff bearing the Francoite flag with the imperial eagle.

According to *Público*, this chat group is just “one of many other chats with a marked extreme right-wing bias and links shared with calls to overthrow the current government”. *Público* said it would publish more such chats in coming days.

These reports confirm the warnings of the WSWs: amid mounting social inequality and the political crisis triggered by the pandemic, powerful forces in European bourgeois politics are spreading and legitimizing fascism. Terrified by rising anger, protests and strikes against “herd immunity” policies and trillion-euro bailouts for corporations and banks, the ruling class is cultivating these forces against the mounting radicalisation of the working class.

The fact that Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias is hated by the fascists does not make him any less hostile to the working class. Aware that mobilising workers against the threat of a fascist coup would also lead them into struggle against his own pro-austerity and militarist government, Iglesias prefers to downplay its significance.

In a recent book presentation, Iglesias once again downplayed the significance of the chats, stating that to claim that the military could repeat a coup like in 1981 “means not understanding this country.” He criticized attempts to “distract ourselves with the chats of old former soldiers; instead we should focus on those narratives which seek to delegitimise” the PSOE-Podemos government.

Iglesias’ argument that pro-Francoite sentiment in the

officer corps and calls for mass murder are irrelevant—in a country where Franco’s fascist military coup in 1936 led to a nearly forty-year fascist dictatorship from 1939 to 1978—is politically criminal. In reality, the Francoites in the officer corps, both active-duty and retired, speak for powerful sections of the entire Spanish ruling class. Their demands for deep social austerity, imperialist war, and “herd immunity” policies on COVID-19, and their coup plotting, proceed under political cover provided by Podemos.

This is because Iglesias is far more afraid of mass opposition among workers and youth to his own herd immunity and austerity policies than he is of a fascistic coup.

These events point to the mounting danger of military-authoritarian rule in Spain and across Europe, and of the need of building a Trotskyist alternative to the reactionary policy of Podemos—sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Spain and internationally.



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