

Amid fascist coup in Washington, Spanish officers intensify far-right plotting

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8 January 2021

On January 6, as Donald Trump launched a fascist coup in Washington—working with high-level officials in the police, US military and the Republican party—retired Lieutenant General Emilio Pérez Alamán sent a letter to Spain’s Defence Minister, Margarita Robles. He demanded she “change the course” of the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government. It is part of an intensifying coup plot by sections of the ruling class aiming to establish a dictatorship amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The letter to Robles, leaked in its entirety to far-right *El Correo de España*, criticised her speech at the annual Military Easter ceremony, which takes place every 6th of January in the Royal Palace in Madrid.

This year, Defence Minister Robles could not avoid mentioning mounting coup threats made by top Spanish army officers while Trump announces his plans to contest the 2020 US election results. For over a year, the fascist Vox party, the third political force in Spain’s parliament, has called on the army to oust the elected PSOE-Podemos government. In November and December, hundreds of high-ranking former officers sent two letters and a manifesto to King Felipe VI, appealing for him to oppose the government.

Leaked WhatsApp messages of some of the former officers discussed shooting “26 million” people and imitating General Francisco Franco’s fascist coup that provoked the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War. One prominent participant in the chat group, Vox party leader Santiago Abascal, also traveled to Washington last February to attend meetings with Trump.

In her 6 January 2021 speech, Robles said the letters and chats come from an “insignificant minority that only represents itself, that seeks publicity and a leading role that it neither deserves nor has, and that irresponsibly questions the foundations of coexistence

in Spain.” She added, “they only deserve the most absolute rejection for their intolerance, delusions and distance from military values.” She said “no one has the right, least of all those who once wore the uniform of the Armed Forces, to harm the immense prestige our armies have, with the full awareness and gratitude of Spanish society.”

Robles was continuing efforts of the PSOE-Podemos government, including deputy Prime Minister and Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias, to dismiss the fascist officers’ threats as those of a few retired bad apples in an otherwise healthy basket. Like Iglesias, Robles chose to ignore videos that have emerged of active-duty Spanish soldiers singing fascist and neo-Nazi songs and making the fascist salute, and a WhatsApp group of active-duty officers openly embraced the former generals calls.

Like the Democratic Party in the US, the PSOE-Podemos government fears and opposes tapping into broad, historically-rooted opposition to fascism in the Spanish and international working class. Amid mass deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic, millions view the Spanish officers’ threats with outrage and alarm. A mobilization of the working class under these conditions would inevitably oppose the policies of herd immunity and austerity that the PSOE and Podemos have implemented, and the interests of the financial oligarchy for which they speak.

Retired General Alamán—who authored a manifesto signed by 750 officers, including 70 generals, accusing the PSOE-Podemos government of posing “a serious risk to the unity of Spain and the constitutional order”—defended the coup plotters.

In a falsely familiar and friendly tone, at one point referring to her as *Doña* Margarita, Alamán challenged Robles’ remark that the coup plotters are distant from

military values. He said, “I think that you have still to understand the soldiers’ spirit, which is logical taking into account your brief time in the Ministry”. Significantly, Alamán affirmed that the coup plotters are not a minority in the officer corps.

Alamán told Robles “not to look at the military, whether active or retired, with the eyes of your Second Deputy Prime Minister”, referring to Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias. He continued, “Your Excellency, in all of them [soldiers] you will only find Love for Spain and Spirit of Sacrifice for all Spaniards.” Robles, Alamán added, is one of the few that can “save face” for Spain’s government.

Alamán concludes by appealing to Robles to make “a good turn at the helm and change course.” This paraphrases the expression that became popular among officers and the Francoite press before the failed February 23, 1981 coup in Spain—when 200 armed Civil Guard officers burst in the parliament and attempted to restore the Francoite regime after it fell in 1978.

This underscores the significance of the multiple reports of a far-right plot, code-named Operation Albatross, aiming to install a dictatorship under the guise of a PSOE-Popular Party-Vox national unity government. The generals reportedly chose Robles as the figurehead of such a government.

Several parts in Robles’ career stand out. In the 1990s, she started out serving as first Secretary of State for the Interior in 1994-1996—becoming the Interior Ministry’s de facto second-in-command as the PSOE government tried to cover up the scandal caused by its use of death squads against the Basque separatist ETA group. In total, 29 people were murdered and 30 wounded.

When Robles returned to the judiciary in the 2000s, she became a leading figure in the judiciary, calling to remove judge Baltasar Garzón over his investigations of crimes committed under the fascist Francoite dictatorship (1939-1978). Garzón was finally removed from the judiciary for violating the 1977 Amnesty Law the Francoites agreed with the Stalinist Communist Party of Spain.

Lastly, Robles was named Defence Minister in June 2018 in a new PSOE government. She has showered the military with billions of euros, including for S-80 submarines, Chinook helicopters, Eurofighters, F-110

frigates and armoured 8x8 Piraña combat vehicles.

The latest letter vindicates warnings that made by the WSWs. Trump’s plotting, culminating in the fascist coup to overrun the Capitol in Washington, is only the sharpest expression of a broad disintegration of democratic forms of rule, amid the pandemic and unsustainable levels of social inequality.

As the WSWs has warned, even though Trump’s coup has fallen short of its goal, such coups will happen again. The danger has not passed in the US or in Europe. Just as US workers and youth cannot place any confidence in the incoming Biden administration to hold the conspirators to account or defend democracy, in Spain, they cannot trust the “left populist” Podemos party to stop the far-right conspiracies of the fascist officers, Vox, and others.

Podemos, which counts among its members a significant number of army officers, is in fact acting as the main tool of the conspirators. At the height of the political crisis provoked by the letters and fascistic chat messages, the state sent Iglesias out to downplay the scandal in prime-time TV interviews where he brazenly claimed that nothing important 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.”

Podemos works to dampen mounting outrage among workers and youth at the coup plotters, the army and to the King, thus letting the conspirators continue their plotting.

The cowardly response of the Democratic Party to Trump’s coup attempt will, moreover, only bolster the Spanish fascist officers in their view that they might be able to carry out a far-right putsch.

This underscores that European workers should support the demand of the Socialist Equality Party (US) for an open, public, live-streamed investigation of all aspects and all the allies of the January 6 fascist coup in Washington.



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