

Spanish fascists vote to save Podemos party's bank and corporate bailouts

Alejandro López
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Spain's minority Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government has passed a bailout handing billions of euros to the banks and corporations thanks to support from the fascist Vox party. The vote sharply exposes the class policy that is pursued. While Vox and Podemos are routinely presented as different anti-system populists—one right and another, supposedly, “left”—both are in the service of the financial aristocracy.

On Thursday, the PSOE-Podemos submitted the “Royal Decree for the Modernization of the Public Administration and for the Execution of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan” in parliament. The law had already been approved in November, with barely any press comment, let alone public debate. However, it required ratification by parliament.

As the WSWs noted in November, the law specified how €140 billion in EU bailout funds will be funnelled to banks and corporations. Large companies from Spain's main stock exchange, Ibex-35, such as Endesa, Iberdrola, Ferrovial and Inditex, are already drafting plans to receive billions.

The reactionary character of the law is clear. Tens of millions of workers and small business owners have only received meagre COVID-19 furlough schemes, if any at all, but billions of euros are to be handed over to the financial aristocracy. It also exposes the lie that there is “no money” for a scientifically guided shelter-at-home policy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and thus save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in Europe.

On Thursday, however, the PSOE-Podemos government's law faced defeat. There were 177 votes against and 173 in favour, after the separatist Catalan Republican Left (ERC) changed its vote. Bucking its consistent support over the past two years for the PSOE-Podemos government, even when it sent ERC leaders to jail on trumped-up charges of sedition and rebellion, the ERC decided to vote against the law. The ERC feared that

if it supported the government, its own vote would collapse in the upcoming February 14 Catalan regional elections.

El País wrote: “The government, which has spent the last hour anguishing over the prospect Congress will overturn the most important decree, that of the management of European funds, the same one that has brought down the Executive in neighbouring Italy, believes it has one last unexpected trump card.” The “trump card” was the fascist Vox party.

After Vox abstained in the vote to allow the EU bailout to pass, Deputy Prime Minister Carmen Calvo thanked the party: “The government's gratitude to all those who protected Spaniards and have understood the message. Today parties had to show if they were up to the problems that Spain faces. There will be few times when politics must be so sincere. I thank you in advance.”

This cynical language notwithstanding, the law represents a historic assault on the working class. It is the main mechanism through which the financial aristocracy will enrich itself in the coming years. It will be paid with pension and labour reforms, wage slashes and cuts in health care and education spending, and above all, by continued “herd immunity” policies condemning hundreds of thousands of people across Europe to die—all with the support of Podemos and the trade unions.

The PSOE-Podemos government's “herd immunity” policy has already cost the lives of over 80,000 people and infected over 2.6 million. The government will continue to claim that in order to “save the economy,” shelter-at-home policies must be rejected. This comes just weeks after Vox's demand for no shelter-at-home was immediately responded to by the PSOE-Podemos government with insistence that these were not on the agenda.

The vote exposes that the EU bailout policy, as well as the health and financial policies of the PSOE-Podemos

government, enjoys the full support of the fascists. It tears to shreds the “anti-fascist” pretensions of Podemos.

In May, Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias called Vox “anti-democratic.” He said Vox defended “the interests of those who have no country other than money” and who “will never defend the general interest.” Iglesias said, “You are not on the side of the Spanish families, you are not patriots, you are on the side of vultures and speculators. You are not a Spanish party but a party of false architects and shameless people who sign irregular projects to enrich themselves with real estate speculation while working to criminalize poor families.”

Podemos stands, however, in the same trench with the “vultures and speculators.” Vox works to drive the political agenda to the right, rehabilitate the bloodstained 1939–1978 Spanish fascist regime led by Francisco Franco, and promote anti-immigrant hatreds in order to divide workers and attack democratic rights. Its program is to install a neo-fascist dictatorship. In this they are aided by Podemos, which provides cover for the implementation of a policy agenda that enjoys the support of the fascists.

The vote also exposed the character of the advanced fascist coup plans Vox and sections of the army have been plotting over the past year. As the WSWS has noted, while ostensibly targeting the PSOE-Podemos government, which has tried to lull workers to sleep by denying the mounting evidence that officers are plotting a coup, the coup is in fact aimed at working class opposition.

The bailout mechanism is a fundamental part of the political economy of the ruling elite’s murderous “herd immunity” policy. The enrichment of the ruling class can only be continued if workers are sent to work and children to school amid a pandemic. Vox abstained precisely so that it can pin blame for this reactionary policy on Podemos and continue to posture as an “anti-system populist” party, even as it supports handing hundreds of billions to the super-rich at the expense of tens of thousands of workers’ lives.

Some of Vox’s supporters—like the far-right web site *OkDiario*’s director, Eduardo Inda—claim this was a “historical and tactical error that will take a tremendous toll [on Vox], and a betrayal of Spaniards.” For these sections, Vox has missed a golden opportunity to bring down the government and further its coup plans.

The faction of Vox that prevailed in the vote, however, decided to bid its time. Since Podemos, on the most fundamental issues, is implementing policies it supports,

it could afford to wait. It manifestly calculates that will be able to profit further from growing working class anger at the bailout, austerity and herd immunity policies implemented by Podemos, inciting nationalism and strengthening its position before a coup to impose a military regime is attempted.

This vote has thus exposed Podemos as a tool of the fascist policies of the ruling class—as are the various bankrupt nationalist and separatist parties. The Basque separatist party Bildu, with its six lawmakers, was essential for the approval of the law. Bildu, formerly the Batasuna party, was the political wing of the armed group ETA, which waged a six-decade armed struggle to carve out a capitalist mini-state in the economically rich Basque Country.

Until their dissolution in 2018, Bildu (Batasuna) and ETA were promoted by many pseudo-left groups like the Pabloite *Anticapitalistas* as part of a “radical left” struggle against the Spanish state. Since ETA ended its armed struggle, however, the Basque nationalists have rapidly integrated themselves into the state apparatus, both in the Basque Country and, increasingly, in Madrid.

The WSWS noted on Bildu in 2018: “For these aspiring upper-middle-class layers, ETA has been an obstacle to their further progress. Its dissolution opens the door to participating more fully in the exploitation of the region’s working class.” Its leader, Arnaldi Otegi, relished “a new situation” which “opens many windows of opportunity.” Nearly three years later, amid the deepest economic and political crisis since the end of the Franco regime in 1978, Bildu is helping implement “herd immunity” against the Basque and Spanish people.



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