

Morenoite Izquierda Diario criticizes lockdowns as COVID-19 surges in Spain

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The Morenoite Workers' Revolutionary Current (CRT) is desperately trying to cover its tracks as Spain records its highest daily cases of COVID-19 infections throughout the entire pandemic. For nearly two years, this petty-bourgeois group has insisted that scientific public health measures were impermissible because they violated “fundamental rights.” Schools had to be reopened even when safety could not “be guaranteed,” it insisted, and youth had to pour back into nightclubs and bars because “Youth have the right to enjoy themselves.”

At key points in the pandemic, as when Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government lifted its limited restrictions in April this year, the CRT downplayed the pandemic. It reacted with silence to the reactionary ruling in August of Spain's Constitutional Court that COVID-19 lockdown measures imposed in spring 2020 were unconstitutional. At the end of summer, it again called for “in-person education” in universities.

Throughout the pandemic, CRT has worked to suppress left-wing opposition to the PSOE-Podemos government as it prioritised corporate profits over human lives. The CRT's pseudo-democratic rhetoric combined “left” demagoguery with tacit support for the banks' programme of reopening schools, workplaces and encouraging youth to get infected. Like the union bureaucracy and Podemos, it is politically implicated in policies that have spread the coronavirus, costing over 110,000 lives in Spain and nearly 1.5 million across Europe.

As daily infections soar past 100,000 in Spain and nearly 1 million in Europe, CRT leader Santiago Lupe penned a piece titled “Ómicron and the sixth wave are not a ‘biblical plague’, there are people responsible” in *Izquierda Diario*. It agitates against scientific public health policies to eliminate the spread of the virus, while covering up the CRT's own responsibility in the disaster. Lupe writes:

“All this is not the product of an evil or a ‘biblical plague’ that has happened, against which nothing can be done, as the central and regional governments have sold us, or those of the rest of the EU governments, since March 2020. Almost

two years after the appearance of Covid-19, excuses such as ‘it could not be foreseen’ are an insult that only seeks to cover up this enormous social crime.”

After having apparently indicted the PSOE-Podemos government for its policies that have led to disaster, Lupe then attacks it not from the left, for failing to protect health and lives, but from the right, for having carried out policies that hurt corporate profits. Predictably, Lupe presents this, like the neo-fascist right, as a defence of individual freedom. He writes:

“Their answer today is the same as other times. Both measures already announced by the Catalan government and those leaked to be discussed tomorrow at the Conference of Presidents. New restrictions, measures without proven impact—like outdoor mask mandates—and, significantly, new limitations on fundamental rights such as those represented by the COVID-19 passport or calls for new curfews. ... With these restrictions, the state reinforces its coercive, Bonapartist mechanisms, even though many of these measures have no proven effect to limit contagion.”

The following day, at the Conference of Presidents, the PSOE-Podemos government's only measure was to reimpose mask mandates throughout Spain. This will have little impact given that most infections occur indoors. The regions refused to implement any lockdowns; at most they have implemented ineffective night-time curfews.

The WSWS has explained that lockdowns are necessary, even when they impose significant temporary restrictions on individuals. They are a key tool to preserve human lives, and their efficacy has been proven in countries which have pursued an elimination strategy against the virus, like China. The closure of nonessential workplaces and turning to remote learning in schools for two months could quickly bring viral transmission under control and eliminate COVID-19.

The CRT is criminally complicit in the policy of the European Union (EU) and the PSOE-Podemos government. Waging a protracted propaganda campaign against measures to control the spread of the virus, in all fundamentals they

are aligned with the demands of the far-right Vox party, which has consistently agitated against even the mildest restrictions.

The CRT's position is not an accident. It reflects the material class interests upon which the CRT is based. Speaking for well-off layers of the upper-middle class and union bureaucrats, whose posts and lifestyles depend on the upward movement of stock markets and the exploitation of workers, CRT aims to keep profits flowing into the coffers of the banks, whatever the cost in lives.

To cover up CRT's alignment with the PSOE-Podemos government, Lupe blames the spread of the virus purely on the government's failure to invest in the public health care and schools. He claims the current catastrophe could have been averted had the government implemented a "reinforcement of primary care satisfying the demands of workers, direct hiring of administrative and contact trackers to offload these tasks from the health workers."

The PSOE-Podemos government's social policies were, indeed, entirely reactionary. However, the simple hiring of more staff would not halt the pandemic. That requires stopping transmission of the virus, i.e., physical distancing followed by contact tracing and isolation of infected individuals. However, Lupe and the CRT reject this policy. Instead, he keeps covering the CRT's reactionary pandemic policy by issuing unserious calls for more public spending, adding:

"The school year began with the dismissal of the already minimal reinforcement of personnel in schools and institutes. With insufficient facilities, ratios of up to 30 and 35 students per classroom and limited teaching staff, who is surprised that schools have become one of the main vectors of contagion? Wasn't it foreseeable that this would be the case when the entire primary school had not even received a first dose of the vaccine until just a few days ago?"

Indeed, the disaster was foreseeable. However, this only underscores the reactionary and cynical role of the CRT, because the CRT foresaw the disaster and defended sending youth and teachers into unsafe schools anyway.

While the WSWS opposed school and university reopenings, calling for building rank-and-file workplace safety committees to fight for the closure of schools and nonessential production, the CRT and *Izquierda Diaria* defended reopening schools, even admitting that teachers' and students' safety "cannot be guaranteed." This year, they called for in-person education in universities. Not once has the CRT called for school closure, though it admits disasters were "foreseeable."

To cover up the CRT's nakedly reactionary role with more empty demagoguery, Lupe concludes by denouncing the pharmaceutical industry, writing:

"Without the lifting of patents and without the intervention of pharmaceutical companies and laboratories to put all their capacity to the manufacture and massive distribution of vaccines across the world, the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on the lives and health of millions threaten to continue and last for a time that no one dares quantify."

By calling for vaccination but denouncing lockdowns or distancing policies, the CRT is aligning itself with the vaccine-only strategy pursued by the EU and the US government. Mass vaccination and strengthening public health care systems are clearly vital. However, they represent only one component of the collective effort needed to eradicate the virus. Even if patents were eliminated and a global vaccine rollout carried out, hundreds of thousands would still die unless this was accompanied by other measures like masking, lockdowns and mass testing.

As the WSWS noted in its perspective last Friday, "Claims that the vaccinated face little danger to their health are entirely unsubstantiated. There is substantial evidence that even the completion of the two-shot regimen is ineffective against infection, with those infected suffering from Long COVID at comparable rates to those who are unvaccinated. In the face of a rapidly spreading virus, it is nothing less than criminal to limit actions to a long and drawn-out campaign for vaccinations that will do little to stop viral transmission in the days and weeks ahead."

CRT stands exposed for what it is: a tool of Podemos to contain growing opposition among workers and youth to the government's policies and dissipate it into harmless channels. Its reactionary role is a warning that the working class cannot rely on any faction of the union bureaucracy or the political establishment.

Against a disastrous surge of the virus now underway, the working class must take matters into their own hands. The WSWS calls for the formation of rank-and-file safety committees in workplaces, schools, public health facilities and neighbourhoods, to impose safe conditions of work and, amid the current surge, build a movement in the working class to impose a scientific policy to eliminate the coronavirus. This requires a conscious and fundamental break with the petty-bourgeois politics of the CRT and *Izquierda Diario*.



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