

# Spanish Morenoite CRT covers for sellout of Barcelona bus strike

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The recent union sellout of bus drivers' strike at Barcelona's public transport authority's (TMB) by the Podemos-linked Workers Commissions (CCOO), the social-democratic General Union of Workers (UGT) unions and the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), illustrates the need for workers to build new organisations of struggle: rank-and-file committees, independent of the unions, controlled democratically by the workers.

In Europe and internationally, workers are resisting attacks on their living standards and demands of the ruling class that they make "sacrifices" for NATO's war on Russia in Ukraine. There is a surge in protests against austerity and strikes for higher wages in the UK, Germany, France and Spain. But these struggles need a clear orientation and perspective. They must be developed into a European and international movement against capitalism and imperialist war, and for socialism.

The union bureaucracies and their pseudo-left political supporters are doing their best to block this development. To wage war in Ukraine and class war at home, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government depends on CCOO, UGT and CGT to act as a labour police, holding back the rising tide of social opposition and working with companies to push through cuts in real wages and layoffs. The Barcelona bus drivers' strike exemplifies this reactionary process.

It is also a devastating exposure of the role of tendencies like the Morenoite Revolutionary Workers' Current (CRT), which are covering for the sellout. Acting to block rising opposition to Podemos, the CRT claims it was a "victory" and the way forward for workers to fight against war and inflation. This is the content of CRT's article "A triumph of the TMB struggle: 'We have achieved a 9 percent increase and a

lot of our demands,'" posted on its *Izquierda Diario* web site.

The article claims the strike was "An example of how to deal with inflation and its terrible consequences for the working class and popular sectors. Faced with the government and trade union bureaucracies' narrative, which barely demand a 2.5 percent wage increase in the context of 8.9 percent inflation (September data), TMB workers have demonstrated that with organization and tools of working class struggle, we can achieve not paying for the capitalist crisis."

This is a fraud, seeking to paint a betrayal as a victory.

Bus drivers called a 24-hour strike on September 22 to denounce stagnant collective bargaining agreement negotiations affecting salary increases, amid escalating inflation. They announced 2-hour stoppages from September 23, the date of La Mercè festivities, one of the most important holidays in Barcelona, until the 30th.

After nine days of work stoppages for only two hours, the CGT, CCOO, UGT, SIT and ACTUB unions decided to suspend all further strike action. They agreed a new 2022-2025 collective agreement with the company.

*Izquierda Diario* uncritically cites Ramiro, a CGT bureaucrat in the TMB company committee who played a central role in the betrayal of the strike:

"What we have achieved, as a result of the mobilization and unity of the workforce, is not only not losing purchasing power but also having quite important raises. ... The people who have less seniority will go from a 3.5 increase to 5 percent and the people with more seniority will go up to 8.8 percent."

With an inflation forecast of 8.5 percent, on which the union agreement is based, the Morenoite- and CGT-

backed agreement is a two-tier attack on workers. New workers will lose 3.5 percent of their real wages while veteran workers will see their earnings rise by just 0.3 percent. This is not a victory, but a defeat!

But even these increases cover another lie. Weeks before, the trade unions CCOO and UGT agreed with the PSOE-Podemos government that civil servants' wages, including TMB bus drivers, would rise 3.5 percent, far below inflation. It was another assault on the living standards of 3.5 million workers.

For TMB workers to increase their wages beyond those set by the unions and the PSOE-Podemos government, they would have to take up a struggle against the entire corporatist-government nexus. The union bureaucracies and the CRT, terrified of mounting opposition to Podemos on its left, wanted to block this development.

As anger mounted, the unions then worked with the company to increase the salaries beyond the stipulated 3.5 percent by adding bonuses. From 2003 to 2021, due to a "calculation error," TMB underpaid its workers, defrauding them of €25.6 million. This theft is now to be returned through an annual payment of €610 per year until 2025, when the agreement expires. Omitted is the fact this payment is variable and subject to meeting certain productivity objectives.

In other words, the unions agreed that after the TMB stole €25.6 million, TMB will then give it back as long as only if workers meet certain objectives. That is the key to the "victory" claimed by the CGT and the CRT. With this €610, veteran workers will have a 0.3 percent raise.

The Morenoites then falsely claim this sellout has broad support, stating, "Through two workers' assemblies, TMB workers ratified the pre-agreement reached by the unions and the management of the public company. A pre-agreement that certifies the achievement of a large part of the demands of the workforce. On Tuesday, the workers held two morning and afternoon shift assemblies to discuss and vote on the pre-agreement reached between TMB management and the unions."

Again, this is a lie. On Tuesday, October 18, the union agreement was rejected in the morning assembly with 223 votes against and 199 in favor. In the afternoon assembly, the unions then rammed through the agreement employing anti-democratic methods.

*La Vanguardia* According pro-business

which here is more open than the self-proclaimed "anti-capitalist workers newspaper," *Izquierda Diario*: "After a long debate, instead of voting, the supporters of the agreement placed themselves on one side of the room and those against on the other, and since the majority was in favor of the agreement, it was agreed not to hold a ballot."

That is, CRT is endorsing the fraudulent vote counts of the union bureaucracies and companies, promoting them as "democratic."

CRT is now cynically using the TMB sellout as an example of how to fight inflation and war. In its statement "Down with militarist budgets, up with salaries and pensions!" it claims: "It is essential to organize a response to face inflation, social crisis, militarism and NATO's road map. We must follow the path of the workers and sectors in struggle that come out to fight like ... workers of TMB buses in Catalonia, who have just achieved a great triumph obtaining the 9 percent salary increase."

The TMB struggle is not a way forward against inflation and war. On the contrary, it is a defeat. If replicated elsewhere, it will only pave the way for further attacks on the working class at home and the rising threat of world war, as the NATO alliance escalates its war against Russia in Ukraine.

Against the pseudo-left's efforts to keep workers tied to the union bureaucracies, the WSWS calls for workers to form independent rank-and-file committees in their workplaces, to democratically organise their struggle outside of the control of the union bureaucracies. This must be connected to the building of a socialist revolutionary leadership in the working class. Not a single problem confronting workers—the threat of nuclear war, exploitation, the threat of fascistic dictatorship—can be resolved within the framework of the capitalist system.



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