

Retired Spanish generals call for coup, back right-wing protests vs PSOE-Sumar government

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Amid mass protests across Spain and internationally against NATO-backed genocide in Gaza, powerful sections of the Spanish bourgeoisie have concluded that they must impose a dictatorial regime. The heart of this conspiracy are sections of the officer corps, police, judiciary and the media close to the neo-fascist Vox party or the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and their allies inside NATO. They are seizing on the amnesty granted by the incoming Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government to Catalan-nationalists involved in the 2017 Catalan independence referendum to whip up a far-right frenzy favorable to their plans.

After tens or hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in support of Gaza in cities across Spain, protests called by the PP and Vox on Saturday gathered 170,000 anti-amnesty protesters. Their slogans included “Pedro Sánchez, son of a bitch!” and calls to send former Catalan regional premier Carles “Puigdemont to prison!” and PSOE prime minister “Pedro Sánchez to prison!”

Afterwards, Vox leader Santiago Abascal requested a meeting with top PP officials. He proposed to use the Senate, where the PP has a majority, to block the amnesty bill. He said, “we must continue resisting with sustained social mobilization, provide a coordinated institutional response in the regions where there is no [PSOE-Sumar] majority, in the Senate and communicate to all our international allies what is happening in Spain.”

Despite their relentless invocation of anti-Catalan chauvinism against the new government, the main target of the plotters is not the PSOE-Sumar government, whose component parties in fact backed the bloody police crackdown on the 2017 Catalan referendum. Their aim is to crush escalating political opposition in the Spanish and international working class.

On Friday, after Sánchez was sworn into office, the pro-Francoite website of the Spanish Military Association (AME) posted a manifesto calling for a coup. The manifesto asserted that the amnesty bill “would erase the crimes committed by those who carried out the coup d’état in Catalonia in October 2017,” and provoke a “possible rupture of the one and indivisible unity of the Spanish nation.”

The statement bore 56 signatures including seven generals,

four brigadier generals and 24 colonels. They declared themselves “concerned about the future of Spain,” denounced supposed “attacks on the rule of law” and appealed to the Spanish army to “dismiss the prime minister and call new elections.”

The manifesto’s signatories are defenders of the fascist traditions of General Francisco Franco’s 1936 coup that led to the Spanish Civil War. They include retired general Fernando de la Malla García and Army Colonel José María Manrique García, who supported the pro-Franco manifesto in 2018 hailing Franco as the savior of Spain. It also includes retired army colonel Efrén Díaz Casal, who signed a letter in November 2020, appealing to the king to support a coup against the “social-communist” PSOE-Podemos government, the predecessor of today’s PSOE-Sumar government.

They also include former captain Díaz Rivera, who said in leaked WhatsApp chats three years ago that “Someday ... someone will have to start doing something (legal or illegal) against these sons of bitches.” In the same chat, retired Major General Francisco Beca called to “kill 26 million people”—in reference to the estimated number of left-wing Spanish voters and their families.

Fascistic sentiment is not only restricted to retired generals. *El Mundo* reported that high-ranking military personnel are preparing a mass resignation if a secessionist referendum is held in Catalonia. It reported that “a significant number of active commanders, with high responsibilities in the country’s security, would resign from their operational positions.”

The presence of supporters of former US President Donald Trump’s failed January 6, 2021 coup in the Spanish protests points to the preparations top officials in the military-police state machine are making in Spain and internationally. Their response to the international movement of workers and youth in defense of Gaza and against the NATO powers’ support for Israeli genocide is to plot their own resort to genocidal repression against the working class, in Spain and internationally.

Significantly, the fascistic US media demagogue Tucker Carlson joined a protest last week with Abascal and groups of

Francoites and neo-Nazis in front of PSOE headquarters in Madrid. He then posted an interview with Abascal, who falsely claimed Spain is on the verge of the “left” taking power “extralegally” by pardoning “terrorists.” He said, “something similar happened in the 1930s, when tens of thousands, mostly Christians were killed. Shot to the head, buried alive. It was the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.”

This pack of historical lies about the Spanish Civil War is a warning: in close collaboration with their NATO allies, Spanish neo-fascists are preparing to repeat in the 21st century their crimes in the 20th century.

Franco launched the Spanish Civil War with an illegal, fascist coup against the elected Popular Front government in July 1936. The war claimed approximately 400,000 lives and was followed by mass executions of around 200,000 left-wing workers or oppositionists and the detention of 800,000 people in concentration camps. For four decades, until it collapsed in 1978 amid a wave of strikes and protests, the Francoite regime and its secret police arrested, tortured and killed political oppositionists, outlawed strikes, political parties and trade unions, and censored newspapers and books.

The PSOE-Sumar government is responding to threats of the Spanish officers, Abascal and Carlson, as PSOE-Podemos did to earlier military threats, by burying its head in the sand. In 2020, then-Podemos leader and deputy prime minister Pablo Iglesias infamously insisted that the general’s call to kill 26 million people had no importance. “What these gentlemen say, at their age and already retired, in a chat with a few too many drinks, does not pose any threat,” he said.

Now, Sumar has impotently called for “forceful and exemplary” measures, though it is in government and could introduce them. The PSOE, for its part, refused to comment publicly. An anonymous PSOE official pathetically told InfoLibre: “The Spanish armed forces are a modern and democratic army. They have nothing to do with these outbursts that are typical of other times.”

But war, genocide, and fascistic reaction are as typical of our times as of the 1930s. Against it, nothing can be expected from the PSOE, Podemos, and Sumar. They have all spent the last three years in government handing over billions of euros to the army, imposing social austerity measures on the workers, and repressing strikes with tens of thousands of riot police.

Desperate to continue their right-wing policies by leaning on the police-state against the workers, they smother and disorient working class opposition to the coup plots. They fear an independent revolutionary movement of the working class a thousand times more than a murderous fascistic coup.

Trotsky, the co-leader with Lenin of the October Revolution and founder of the Fourth International, concisely summed up the basic perspectives facing the working class in such a situation. His analysis exposes both the role of Vox and the reactionary impotence of Podemos, Sumar and other political descendants of the Popular Frontist tendencies of the 1930s. In

“Lesson of Spain,” published shortly after Franco’s coup, Trotsky wrote:

The danger lies not in the military braggarts and demagogues who openly appear as fascist; incomparably more menacing is the fact that at the approach of the proletarian revolution the officers’ corps becomes the executioner of the proletariat. ... It is necessary to replace the troops in the barracks commanded by the officers’ caste with the people’s militia, that is, with the democratic organization of the armed workers and peasants. There is no other solution. But such an army is incompatible with the domination of exploiters big and small. Can the republicans agree to such a measure? Not at all. The People’s Front government, that is to say, the government of the coalition of the workers with the bourgeoisie, is in its very essence a government of capitulation to the bureaucracy and the officers. Such is the great lesson of the events in Spain, now being paid for with thousands of human lives.

Today, the working class faces the task of organizing itself independently, in rank-and-file organizations of struggle, to counter the fascist plotting and break through the political inertia imposed on workers by Podemos, Sumar and their various middle-class satellites. This requires above all the building of a new revolutionary leadership of the working class. The critical task in this explosive situation is building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement, in Spain and internationally.



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