

Reject the Cantabria metalworkers' pre-agreement! Build rank-and-file rebellion against Spanish union bureaucrats' sellout!

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Spain's main union federations, CCOO, UGT-FICA and USO, have announced a pre-agreement with metal employers' association PYMETAL in a bid to shut down the strike of 22,000 metalworkers in Cantabria. The deal will be put to a vote in a workers' assembly tomorrow. It is a calculated attempt to end the strike, isolate it from other emerging labor struggles, and keep it from evolving into a broader political challenge to austerity and war.

The union bureaucrats are trying to pass this off as a victory. In a joint statement, they claimed, "The sector is going through a good period, and the agreement had to reflect that," adding, "we were not going to settle unless wage conditions were improved and the acquired rights of the 22,000 people working in the sector in Cantabria were maintained."

This is a sham. Under the proposed deal, workers would recover just 3 of the 4 percent of real wages lost in 2022, spread over four years, while inflation continues to eat away at their living standards. The deal would not recover lost wages, but make permanent real wage cuts workers suffered under the last contract, pushed through by these same union tops.

That 2022 agreement was a deliberate act of sabotage. The union leadership negotiated a deal, fully aware it meant a significant loss in real wages. They made every effort to keep the Cantabria strike isolated from other struggles in the metal sector, including in Bizkaia and Araba, and from other sections of the working class. Backed into a corner, workers were ultimately forced to accept the deal, though 35 percent voted against it.

Nonetheless, workers showed tremendous resolve, sustaining a 19-day strike culminating in a mass demonstration in Santander. Fearing that the struggle could no longer be contained, the unions turned to the government for help. Yolanda Díaz, then Minister of

Labor under Podemos and now leader of Sumar, was brought in to "mediate." In reality, her role was to strangle the strike. A senior government source admitted to *El País* that the strike was "taking on significant dimensions," and that Díaz had offered her expertise in "social dialogue."

This allowed the employers to continue reaping over €400 million annually in profits while workers' wages stagnated. The unions and Podemos helped offload the costs of the capitalist pandemic response, focused entirely on protecting private wealth, onto the backs of the workers. Now, the PSOE-Sumar coalition is again using the same methods, the same lies and the same instruments of repression to try to crush worker resistance.

The so-called "concessions" in the 2025 pre-agreement are a desperate ploy to make outright defeat look like a compromise. The union bureaucracies' goal is to preserve what the employers gained in 2022. This is why the PSOE-Sumar government enthusiastically endorses the deal.

Pedro Casares, PSOE's secretary general in Cantabria, declared it "a great example" and conveyed "on behalf of the PSOE, congratulations and thanks to both parties for being able to put themselves in each other's shoes, for sitting down to dialogue, negotiate, and reach an agreement."

Today, metal workers are in an even more favorable position than three years ago. Metal workers all across Spain are planning to go on strike, or they are entering battles over collective agreements like Cantabria. In June 18 and 19, 27,000 metalworkers in Cádiz are going on strike with the possibility of it becoming indefinite, starting on the June 23. In Cartagena, 20,000 metalworkers are starting to negotiate a new collective agreement. In A Coruña, there is mounting discontent as

metalworkers prepare for the renewal of their contracts.

Protests are also underway, and strikes are also being prepared at the Navantia shipyards in Cartagena, Spain's largest military-industrial company.

This is not limited to the metal sector with class struggle intensifying across Spain, which has seen growing workers' mobilisations in numerous sectors. There was a historic first strike at Iberdrola, a transnational electric utility company serving around 30 million customers worldwide, which saw massive participation by the 9,500-strong workforce. In Asturias, more than 30,000 teachers demonstrated, and thousands are taking part in an indefinite strike that led to the resignation of the regional Education Minister.

Protests have also erupted at ArcelorMittal, one of the world's largest steel producers; the Aboño plant has been on strike for nearly two weeks after the dismissal of two workers, though courts ruled in their favor. In Donostia, 280 workers from CAF Power & Automation have taken to the streets to demand fair conditions.

These are not isolated disputes. They reflect a rising wave of class resistance in Spain as well as internationally. If coordinated in unified action, these struggles could overturn decades of austerity and intensifying exploitation. That is exactly what the ruling class, its political servants in Podemos and Sumar, and the union bureaucracy fear.

The broader political context only heightens the urgency. The European Union is preparing for war, planning to spend trillions of euros on plans for war with Russia in Ukraine and beyond. Rearmament is underway and the metal sector is central to these plans. The strikes in Cantabria, Cadiz and beyond threaten the smooth functioning of weapons production and the resulting extraction of profits.

The wealth produced by the working class should not be used for war, but on wages, education, health care and housing. The strike can be broadened into a struggle to defend their own living standards and to strike at the heart of the militarist agenda of the EU, by halting weapons production, disrupting supply chains, and ending the dispatch of weapons to NATO wars and the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The government, the unions and big business are united in their efforts to halt discussion of these issues and end the strike. They instead offer lies of "victory." Workers must not be deceived. If they accept this deal, their wages will continue to collapse under the impact of inflation and austerity.

The social decline facing Cantabrian workers is a snapshot of the broader crisis facing the European working class. According to Spain's National Institute of Statistics, real wages in Cantabria fell by 12.2 percent between 2008 and 2022, as billions were handed over to the banks after the 2008 financial crash and the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020. This was the result of deliberate policy, enforced by union bureaucracies that function as a labor police to suppress resistance and impose the demands of big business.

Workers cannot trust Podemos, which backs the PSOE-Sumar government in parliament but has postured as a defender of the strike. On Friday, its Cantabrian coordinator, Mercedes González, said police repression of strikes "is characteristic of an authoritarian state." But it was under Yolanda Díaz—first as a leader in Podemos, now in Sumar—that the Spanish state deployed armored vehicles and riot squads to crush metalworkers in Cádiz in 2022.

The way forward lies in the independent mobilisation of the working class. Workers must form rank-and-file committees, independent of the unions, to take control of the struggle into their own hands. These committees must coordinate with workers across regions and sectors—from metalworkers in Cádiz and A Coruña, to teachers in Asturias, to shipbuilders in Cartagena.

And they must look beyond Spain, building ties with workers throughout Europe and the world who are confronting the same capitalist crisis and moving to fight back. The Trump administration's dispatching of armed forces to Los Angeles to crush protests against mass deportations of immigrants highlights this in the sharpest possible way.

We call on workers to vote "no" on the pre-agreement tomorrow, Tuesday. But the broader goal must be to build a mass movement of the working class against austerity, war, genocide and the capitalist system that gives rise to them.



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