

Cádiz metalworkers reject Spanish union sellout contract

Santiago Guillen
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This week, metalworkers of Cádiz rejected a sellout contract that the union bureaucracies had prepared in an effort to call off their strike. On June 18-19, around 26,000 metalworkers in Cádiz supported, with nearly 100 percent participation, two days of walkouts to force a new collective bargaining agreement with the Cádiz metal industry employers' association, FEMCA. If no agreement was reached starting Monday the 23rd, the strike was to become indefinite, and strike action is continuing.

This contract under negotiation must replace the one signed by the Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO) and Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) unions in 2021. That year, the CCOO and UGT bureaucracies sold out the workers, imposing a wage loss of 7 to 8 percent and failing to address issues such as job insecurity, long working hours, or dangerous working conditions. The union confederations are once again trying to force an agreement with the employers that entails a serious loss of rights and working conditions for the workers.

On the night of Sunday the 22nd, the social-democratic UGT, the majority union on the works council, announced that it had reached an agreement with the employers. UGT's provincial secretary Antonio Montoro called it a "positive" tool to break the deadlock in the conflict and declared it would provide "important stability."

In fact, the proposed deal was a new attack on workers' labor and social conditions, which would further worsen what had already been lost in 2025. In terms of wages, workers would not recover what they have lost in recent years; starting in 2025, wages would rise according to the actual CPI, but with a cap of 2.5 percent. If the CPI is higher, the difference would be paid as a separate bonus and would not be added to the base salary, implying a real loss of purchasing power.

The agreement also would establish a paltry wage of only 75 percent of the base salary for new workers during the first 18 months of their contract. Moreover, it does not limit subcontracting or temporary employment. Additionally, the new agreement would last until 2032, leaving workers without bargaining power for 7 years. The local press cited workers who said "this would be the worst labor agreement in 40 years."

When on Monday UGT brought the deal to workers' assemblies, thinking they could deceive the workers, the workers rejected it and decided to continue with the indefinite strike.

This rejection shows the importance of rank-and-file organization and that workers have their own voice. A couple of weeks earlier, another treacherous agreement by the unions in the Cantabria region to impose a contract that offered only minimal improvements for the metalworkers there was approved by assemblies in which only union delegates participated—just over 200 out of 22,000 workers. These delegates mostly make up the lower ranks of the union bureaucracy.

The Cantabria agreement specifically aimed to prevent the Cantabria strike from spreading and joining forces with the one in Cádiz and other areas where mobilizations are underway, such as Cartagena and Coruña.

The attempted betrayal outraged the workers of Cádiz. When the agreement became known on Monday morning, several hundred workers marched in protest to the UGT headquarters. The response from the PSOE-Sumar government, which hypocritically calls itself "the most progressive in history," was to immediately defend its union lackeys by sending dozens of riot police against the workers. The cops violently attacked the strikers, three of whom were detained.

Cynically, the leadership of the other union, the Stalinist CCOO, said it did not support the agreement, for which their votes are not needed since the CCOO is a minority on the works council. CCOO is doing everything it can to avoid losing face and appearing as traitors to the workers. However, it refused to maintain the strike and continues negotiating with UGT, trying to sugarcoat this agreement and impose it on the workers through lies.

The Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government is weak, plagued with corruption scandals and committed to rearmament and increased military spending, which will lead to new social cuts. This rearmament plan will depend significantly on metallurgical industries like those now striking in Cadiz. PSOE and Sumar are both doing everything they can to prevent the strike from spreading and threaten its plans and its own survival. In this, they are relying on the help of the union bureaucracies.

No minister or leader of the pseudo-left Sumar party, including its leader and Minister of Labor Yolanda Díaz, has rejected the agreement. The Sumar deputy for Cádiz, Esther Gil, said the agreement “reinforces precariousness” and that she respects the decision of the workers who rejected it. However, neither she nor anyone else in Sumar criticized the betrayals of UGT and CC.OO.

With these statements, Sumar in Cádiz is trying to save face before the workers, while in Spain it is part of the government that represses and arrests workers.

The position of Podemos, the other pseudo-left party that was part of the government from 2020 to 2023, was equally hypocritical. Its spokesperson in Andalusia described the strike as a symbol of the “dignity of the working class” standing up to fight, while avoiding any criticism of the traitorous unions. In 2021, as part of the government, Podemos sought to trample on that dignity of the working class by sending hundreds of heavily armed riot police, even with armored vehicles, against the striking workers.

The strike continues with pickets, roadblocks, and workers’ marches chanting slogans like “War, war, war!” and “Not one step back in the metalworkers’ struggle.”

On Wednesday the 25th, thousands of workers and their families demonstrated through Cádiz, ending in front of the CC.OO. and UGT headquarters to

denounce their betrayals. Spontaneously, hundreds of residents took to the streets and balconies to support the workers. Several hospitals and health centers also joined in: medical staff and patients applauded in solidarity as the march passed by their facilities.

The leadership of the strike is now in the hands of small unions such as the Metal Workers’ Coordinating Committee and the CGT. These unions denounce the CCOO and UGT bureaucracies and its betrayals but ultimately limit the struggle to the metal sector in Cádiz and do not provide a political perspective for struggle against war, austerity and the PSOE-Sumar government.

Confronting the metal companies in Cádiz requires confronting their powerful allies: the unions, the PSOE-Sumar government, and its austerity and war agenda, behind which stands the entire capitalist class. Winning this battle requires establishing independent and democratic rank-and-file committees with a socialist and anti-capitalist perspective to broaden the struggle to other sectors of the working class across Spain and internationally.



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