

Spanish unions try to impose new sellout contract on Cádiz metalworkers

Santiago Guillen
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The Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) and Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) bureaucracies are still trying to break the metalworkers strike in Cádiz, which has continued since June 23. On June 26, the UGT reached a new agreement with the metal employers' association of Cádiz, FEMCA, which was nothing more than a rehash of the deal UGT itself had agreed to the previous Sunday night and which rank-and-file workers voted down.

To avoid a similar outcome this time, UGT did not want the workers to vote on the agreement. They signed it directly without a vote, thereby calling off the strike.

Comisiones Obreras also repeated the same strategy as in previous days: as their votes were not needed to approve the agreement due to their minority status on the works council, they rejected UGT's deal with the employers to avoid exposing themselves as traitors before the workers. However, they showed that they too wanted to end the strike by refusing to continue it or to call on workers to mobilize against UGT's treacherous agreement with the employers. Their only proposal was to legally challenge certain aspects of the agreement at a later date.

If the workers fail to defeat UGT's betrayal, with the covert support of CC.OO., they will see their conditions worsen significantly. They will not recover real wages lost in recent years and could lose even more purchasing power if inflation rises above the agreed 2.8 percent this year.

It will take six years for workers to fully recover hazard pay, which will save companies millions of euros while workers remain in dangerous conditions without compensation. Moreover, there are no clear criteria to classify which activities are considered hazardous, making it easier for companies to classify dangerous tasks as non-hazardous. Furthermore, the

agreement perpetuates precariousness by maintaining training contracts with lower wages and continuing to leave permanent seasonal workers without any job security.

But it is not even certain that the companies will comply with the agreement, as they have repeatedly failed to do so with previous collective agreements. There is no mechanism for monitoring or sanctions, and workers are excluded from overseeing the implementation of the agreement, leaving them exposed to reprisals if they report violations.

Manuel Balber, spokesperson for the Coordinadora de Trabajadores del Metal (CTM), one of the unions opposing the agreement, stated: "We're not here for a 2 percent raise or the hazard pay, although those matter too. Mainly, we're here because the agreements are not being enforced."

Another point generating strong opposition is that the agreement will extend until 2032 with no possibility of modifications, effectively tying workers' hands until 2032 without any ability to renegotiate conditions in response to economic or social changes.

But this also has major implications for the Spanish government and its rearmament plans. On the one hand, it ensures that the metal sector in Cádiz, which is key for weapons manufacturing, will remain operational for seven years without strikes.

At the recent NATO summit in The Hague, Spain's PSOE-Sumar government already committed to a historic increase in military spending to 2.1 percent of GDP. Moreover, it signed an agreement to raise it to 5 percent of GDP by 2035. This increase in military spending, which will inevitably happen sooner or later, will lead to a significant rise in austerity and devastating attacks on Spain's welfare state, starting with education and health care.

The metalworkers of Cádiz are especially known for their struggle and combativeness. Today, the union bureaucracies are trying to ensure to this and future governments that there will be no more mobilizations in Cádiz that could serve as an example or unite with other struggles in Spain or internationally, even as brutal attacks against the working class are looming. The workers of Cádiz not only face the companies in this sector, but also the demands of Spanish and NATO imperialism.

In fact, UGT and CC.OO. want at all costs to prevent the different conflicts in the metal industries from coming together. Three weeks ago, both unions ended the strike in the Cantabria region after signing an agreement with minimal concessions to the employers.

Meanwhile, alongside the strike in Cádiz, workers at subcontractor companies in Cartagena, in the Murcia region, are maintaining an indefinite strike to negotiate a new agreement. Neither Comisiones Obreras nor UGT have made any effort to unify these strikes and launch a joint struggle. On the contrary, they try to isolate and end them as soon as possible, as they already did in Cantabria and now seek to do in Cádiz.

Although UGT did not want the new agreement to be voted on, on Friday morning an assembly of more than a thousand workers, called by the minority unions, voted against the agreement and decided to continue the strike. The workers strongly criticized the Minister of Labour and leader of Sumar, Yolanda Díaz, accusing her of “looking the other way” and allowing “exploitation of workers at Navantia, a public company.”

The anger towards Díaz has grown after it became known that on Saturday she attended the Pride march in Budapest, which was banned by Orban’s government, but she has not once gone to Cádiz in recent weeks to support the workers, nor has she made any statement about the conflict.

Díaz, who was once part of the Stalinist Spanish Communist Party (PCE), will not support the workers because that would mean confronting unions, with which she and her government actively collaborate. However, she also cannot publicly support UGT’s agreement because that would make her appear even more as an enemy of the Spanish working class.

The minority unions continue the strike and have called a demonstration on Monday the 30th to

denounce UGT’s maneuvers. The CTM is issuing bankrupt appeals to the government to get involved in seeking a solution. Manuel Balber explained, “The workers want the agreements to be respected, we want a dignified life, we don’t want to be locked up in prisons.”

Asking the government to find a solution is like asking the wolf to guard the henhouse. PSOE and Sumar are defenders of capitalism and Spanish imperialism, and the interests of their union partners align with those of the companies, not the workers. Workers can only trust themselves; they must form rank-and-file committees to oppose the efforts of the union bureaucracy to contain and demobilize their struggle, but also to fight against European governments like PSOE-Sumar, that push austerity and exploitation to advance the interests of capitalism and imperialism.



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