

Jeering metalworkers force Sumar's Yolanda Díaz to suspend rally in Cádiz

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16 July 2023

In a harbinger of the reckoning to come with the pro-war, pro-capitalist pseudo-left tendencies across Europe and internationally, a group of metalworkers forced the Sumar party leader, acting Deputy Prime Minister of the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government and Labour Minister Yolanda Díaz, to suspend a campaign rally in the city of Cádiz.

Sumar is the electoral rebrand of Podemos, after it has been widely discredited by its role as coalition partner of the PSOE. The rally happened last week in Cádiz's main square, when Díaz took the microphone and began her speech for the July 23 national elections. She described the precarious employment situation in Cádiz and expressed her solidarity with those recently laid off at state-owned shipbuilding company Navantia, which is in fact run by her own acting government. Soon after, 50 metalworkers dressed in helmets and black T-shirts burst into the square shouting, "Not one step backwards in the metalworkers' struggle."

Díaz, who according to the agenda was going to speak for 20 minutes, hastily finished her speech after six minutes and was escorted out by her bodyguards and police through a side street. The entire rally was reduced to barely half an hour.

A trade union representative, Israel Garcia, appeared after Díaz left the scene to tell the press apologetically, "We have not come to break up the rally," only wanting to highlight the terrible situation faced by workers and their families.

The media seized on this statement to portray events, which rapidly spread across social media, as a mistake. Workers, it was repeatedly insisted, did not aim to oppose Díaz but simply to highlight their precarious conditions.

Even the right-wing press, traditionally hostile to Sumar, intervened to cover up workers' hatred of politicians like Díaz. "Navantia metalworkers boycotted 'by mistake' the campaign act of Yolanda Díaz in Cádiz"

was the headline of right-wing *El Mundo*.

The intervention of the metalworkers at Díaz's campaign, however, is a microcosm of the intensifying opposition of workers to the pseudo-left parties across Europe. It was a humiliating rebuke to the PSOE-Podemos government, which has championed the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, slashed pensions and wages, pursued a profits-over-lives policy in the COVID-19 pandemic, and massively hiked the military budget and bailouts for major banks and corporations.

The snap general election was called as a strike wave started to develop in Spain and as the class struggle intensified across Europe, with millions protesting and striking in France, the UK, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Italy and across the world. In Spain, strikes numbers have risen during the first half of the year by 21 percent on the same period last year.

The PSOE and Podemos, terrified of massive working-class opposition to war, austerity and police-state repression erupting uncontrollably on its left flank, called these elections to cut across the class struggle with a campaign they knew would be dominated by right-wing narratives, following victories for the People's Party and Vox in earlier regional elections and create the best conditions for the next government to escalate class war at home and military aggression abroad.

Contrary to the media's claims, metalworkers in Cádiz know full well the brutality of the PSOE-Podemos government and figures like Díaz. In November 2021, a powerful, week-long strike by 22,000 metalworkers in Cádiz paralysed the region. Workers set up pickets and barricades and occupied their workplaces, defeating attempts by the PSOE-Podemos government's riot police to retake the factories with truncheons, rubber bullets and teargas.

As workers and supporters took to the streets to defend the strike, the government deployed a 15-ton BMR

(Medium Armoured Vehicle on Wheels), designed for war zones, to terrorize the working-class neighborhoods of Cádiz, which became infamously known as the “tankette.”

Incapable of controlling the situation, the PSOE-Podemos government relied on the trade unions to ram through a sell-out deal including below inflation wage increases.

Last week, the unions were forced to call a strike after the management of Navantia-Cádiz imposed new redundancies, then called it off at the last minute. The company’s actions prove that Díaz’s promises to defend workers in Navantia made at the start of her speech in Cádiz are hot air.

On Friday, Díaz travelled to her home region of Galicia. This time in a well-guarded meeting stacked with supporters, she declared, “I call for solidarity with striking metalworkers” in the region.

The level of cynicism is staggering. In the region of Pontevedra, Galicia, 33,000 metalworkers in the metallurgical, naval, automotive and aeronautical industries have launched 6 two-day strikes since June 18. Workers are now on an indefinite strike, after mass assemblies voted in favour. They are calling for wages to be brought in line with inflation and a 24-hour reduction in the working year, among other demands.

Díaz’s acting PSOE-Podemos government has responded like they did in Cádiz. Every day, hundreds of anti-riot police have been deployed to beat strikers and protestors with truncheons and shoot them with rubber bullets. Some demonstrations have been outlawed. On Friday, July 7, a group of protestors was prevented from joining a demonstration. One worker was arrested after refusing to be identified by the police.

Amnesty International has requested the government investigate the 'indiscriminate shooting' of rubber bullets against the protestors.

In one protest in Vigo, a group of metalworkers confronted the union leaders from Sumar-linked Workers Commissions (CCOO), the social-democratic General Union of Workers (UGT); and the pro-Galician separatist Interunion Galician Confederation (CIG). One yelled at a bureaucrat, “My fight is not yours, you bring us to the lion’s den, listen to the people.” Another worker called on the unions to unveil the backdoor negotiations with management, urging them to “show us what you were going to propose, explain to the people what you want to do. You are very wrong.” Scuffles broke out between workers and bureaucrats.

As they are doing in all strikes, the unions are trying to isolate metalworkers, claiming that negotiations should be limited to the provincial level, where collective agreements are signed. Over the past months, they have called metalworkers out on separate days in each province, ramming through wage increases below inflation in the Balearic Islands and Valencia. Their aim is to avoid a unified struggle of metalworkers across the country, let alone calling on other sections of workers—like healthcare workers, aircrew, civil servants and others—to fight as one.

In Pontevedra, they have not even coordinated their strike with striking food distribution workers or ambulance drivers in the same region. Nor did they appeal to Stellantis (formerly Citroën) workers, the most important metal company in Pontevedra, pathetically claiming it has its own collective agreement.

Behind the scenes, the unions are trying to shut down all strike activity. Last week, they canceled two days of strikes to “give the employers time to negotiate.”

Despite this, they have been forced to call indefinite action starting tomorrow.

Sumar does not represent an alternative to the PP and Vox in these elections. Rather, its attacks on workers have paved the way for the growth of these forces that stand to win in this Sunday’s elections. Its actions underscore the necessity for the working class to build rank-and-file committees to wage the class struggle independently from the trade union bureaucracy, and a new and genuinely socialist leadership, a Spanish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, in opposition to the middle-class, pro-war, pro-austerity parties like Sumar and Podemos.



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