November 11 strike in Spain: Build action committees, prepare a European general strike!

European Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site

On Wednesday, November 11, millions of workers in Spain are holding a 24-hour nationwide strike against soaring housing costs, falling living standards and the social crisis. Initially called for by participants in mass housing protests, it was later backed by Spain's two main trade union federations, the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the General Workers Union (UGT).

The strike comes as a historic wave of workers' struggles and mass youth protests sweeps Europe. In France, after weeks of mass youth protests, last week's nationwide strike saw 1.6 million people protest in 193 cities, and a further strike has been called for November 17. In Germany, over 120,000 youth marched in 30 cities against education cuts and the reintroduction of military service. Mass youth protests and strikes have erupted in Italy, Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Serbia, and nationwide strikes are called in Italy (November 20) and Greece (November 25).

In Spain, a mass strike wave is underway. Some 35,000 metalworkers in Murcia are on an indefinite strike, despite police repression by the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government. In Madrid and Castilla y León nearly 100,000 public school teachers are striking. Rail workers staged nationwide stoppages after the October 28 Urda train disaster, which killed 69 people. Doctors across several regions are striking over deteriorating conditions in the public health system, and around 126,000 meat-processing workers are striking this whole week.

The decisive question facing workers across Europe is the independent organization and international unification of this movement on a revolutionary perspective. Workers and youth must build rank-and-file committees of action to organize the struggle independently of the union bureaucracies, oppose capitalist parties, unite with their class brothers and sisters across Europe, and prepare a European general strike. Such a strike would directly pose the question of who will rule Europe: the capitalist oligarchy or the working class?

The November 11 strike originated in the mass protests against the PSOE-Sumar government's housing policies and, in particular, the brutal September 23 eviction of 87-year-old Maricarmen Abascal that led to her death. Since the PSOE first formed a government coalition with Podemos in 2019, rents have risen by approximately 45 percent and house prices by 86 percent. Millions of people protested in early October, occupying city squares across the country, and calls for a general strike circulated massively.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez responded by dissolving his own PSOE-Sumar government and calling snap elections for November 29. He was holding a gun to the workers' heads, offering a poisoned choice of either supporting the current ruling parties, or accepting the arrival in power of the alliance between the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the fascist Vox party. The Stalinist CCOO bureaucracy linked to Sumar and the social-democratic UGT bureaucracy linked to the PSOE then abandoned their earlier refusal to call nationwide strike action.

The November 11 strike, the ruling parties and union bureaucracies noisily proclaim, aims to support the government. Last Friday, Sánchez declared: “This strike goes against no one, it’s a strike for a cause, named after a woman, an eighty-year-old who died after being evicted from her home …”

Similarly, UGT General Secretary Pepe Álvarez said: “Are we going to strike against a government that has raised the minimum wage? But what the fuck do they think? That we’re idiots?” Emilio Delgado, a leader in the Broad Front, led by Sumar but including Podemos in several regions, declared: “This isn’t a strike against the government, it’s a strike against power.”

This is fraudulent propaganda. The cause for which Spain’s housing protesters took action was opposition to the policies of Sánchez, whose police mounted the eviction that led to Maricarmen’s death. Millions of workers across Europe are striking against the powers-that-be, because they oppose policies implemented in Spain by the PSOE-Podemos (2019-2023) and PSOE-Sumar (2023-2026) governments.

These governments doubled the military budget, helping arm Israel during the Gaza genocide and far-right forces like Ukraine’s Azov Battalion in the NATO war against Russia. They oversaw police massacres of immigrants in Melilla and then Ceuta. They handed over tens of billions of EU bailout funds to Spanish corporations even as workers faced growing hardship. This opened a path for the bourgeoisie to normalize Vox, which demagogically exploited social anger against their policies.

While maintaining intransigent opposition to the PP and Vox, workers must oppose attempts to divert the movement behind a bankrupt, national perspective of re-electing the Sánchez government. They cannot leave the struggle to pro-government forces like the CCOO and UGT bureaucracies. The Spanish state, which, like countries across Europe, is indebted to the capitalist oligarchy to the tune of 100 percent of Spain’s GDP, has no financial room to back down and make social concessions to working people.

The burning issues facing working people in Spain and internationally will not be resolved by maneuvers at the top of the capitalist state machine, but only by the fullest possible mobilization of the class struggle.

The November 11 strike is a starting point. It brings together in a single day sections of workers who have been fighting separately for weeks. Across Europe, the union bureaucracies have scheduled national strikes in Spain, France, Italy and Greece a week or more apart, each kept separate from the others.

Against this division, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) advance the program of a coordinated European struggle against war and the capitalist oligarchy. The IWA-RFC, founded on the initiative of the International Committee of the Fourth International in 2021, provides the framework through which committees in different workplaces, industries and countries can share information, coordinate action and break the isolation that the union apparatuses impose on each struggle.

In Spain, this means organizing independently of the CCOO and UGT apparatuses, which called the November 11 strike only after Sánchez dissolved parliament, and only to channel the anger it expresses behind his re-election.

The entry of the working class into a struggle to reverse the entire course of European society since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 raises the critical importance of Trotskyist opposition to both Stalinism and capitalism. The record of the PSOE-Podemos and PSOE-Sumar governments, and the eruption of mass opposition to them, illustrate this in the sharpest possible way.

The decisive struggle in the Trotskyist movement was the 1953 split, in which the ICFI was founded in opposition to a faction led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel that promoted Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism as the legitimate leadership of the working class. More than 70 years later, its significance emerges directly in Spain, where Pabloite and Stalinist forces joined in building the pro-capitalist Podemos party, out of which Sumar emerged.

The ICFI insists that the era of socialist revolution opened by the October 1917 revolution has not ended. Against all those who claim that capitalist governments and the union bureaucracies can be pressured into granting the demands of workers, it fights to build a political movement in the working class to transfer power to the workers and build socialism.

The European sections of the ICFI advance this program in the November 11 strike and the struggles spreading across Europe: the building of independent rank-and-file committees, the preparation of a European general strike against war and the capitalist oligarchy, and the replacement of the European Union by the United Socialist States of Europe. They are fighting to build sections of the ICFI in Spain and throughout the continent to lead this struggle.

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