

Spain takes its place in the imperialist war against Libya

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The Spanish parliament voted last week in favour of Spanish military intervention in Libya with 336 in favour, just 3 against and 1 abstention.

The parties voting in favour were the ruling Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Socialist Workers Party of Spain—PSOE), the main opposition Partido Popular (Popular Party—PP), Convergència I Unió (CiU), Partido Nacionalista Vasco (Basque Nationalist Party—PNV), Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Catalan Republican Left—ERC) and Unión Progreso y Democracia (Unity Progress and Democracy—UPyD).

Those voting against were Izquierda Unida (IU—United Left) and the Bloque Nacionalista Gallego (BNG—Galician Nationalists).

Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero repeated the barrage of lies accompanying the military assault on Libya. “We are in Libya to defend the citizens from the attacks from their own Libyan forces”, he claimed, adding this is a “humanitarian principle” whose “objective is to warn him [Gaddafi] that he must stop using arms against his people and that the international community is willing to use force.”

The president of the right-wing PP, Mariano Rajoy, supported the intervention in order to “defend the most important thing we have in this world, the people, their lives and their individual rights”.

This same party, under José Maria Aznar, voted in favour of the war in Iraq, with the result of more than a million dead.

The parliamentary vote and military involvement of Spain is supported by the “liberal” media, such as *El País* and *Público*. In an article headlined “Iraq 2003 or Spain 1936?” published in *El País*, author Javier Valenzuela, after dismissing any similarities with Iraq, compares Gaddafi’s attacks on the civilian population with General Franco’s march on Madrid during the

civil war. This turns history on its head. The PSOE’s actions—participation in the strafing of a largely defenceless former colonial country—is more akin to the Nazi Blitzkrieg unleashed by Hitler’s Condor legion in towns and cities throughout Spain in 1936-1939.

Spain’s trade union leaders even criticised the government for its slow response. The general secretary of the Union General de Trabajadores (General Workers Union—UGT), Candido Mendez, declared that speed is necessary “because the impression is that this massacre can continue”, whilst Fernández Toxo of Comisiones Obreras (Workers Commissions—CC.OO) hoped that the intervention has not arrived too late, “so late that the massacre has ended”.

The prime minister declared that Spanish F-18 warplanes would not bomb any tanks or artillery. But this was belied by his foreign minister, Trinidad Jimenez, who stated, “The United Nations resolution expressly says that other kinds of resources, beyond just the imposition of a no-fly zone, can be used with the aim of protecting the civilian population (in Libya)”.

Prior to the parliamentary vote, the Spanish government had already sent five airplanes, four F-18 planes and one tanker Boeing 707 plane, which are already patrolling the Libyan skies. Along with this, one frigate, one submarine and 500 troops will be sent.

Spain’s participation in the attack on Libya, alongside the United States, France and Britain, has nothing to do with defending human rights. While Spain’s ruling elite and the media now claim to be outraged at repression by Gaddafi’s regime, there is a high probability that some of the weapons Gaddafi has used against civilians have been made and sold by Spain.

In 2007, Gaddafi visited Spain to negotiate deals and

investments in petrol, gas, tourism and infrastructure. Behind the scenes, one of the main topics was major arms deals.

The Zapatero government made a deal to sell €3.84 million worth of category 4 weapons in 2008. These include bullets, bombs, torpedoes, missiles, grenades and mines. A year later, this figure climbed to €12.7 million. The latest figures for 2010 show that aircraft components, radar and infrared equipment valued at €7 million were sold to the Libyan government.

Evidence of Zapatero's "commitment" to human rights is his latest tour of Arab regimes earlier this month amid the protests in North Africa and the Middle East.

Leading a business delegation, his first visit was to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, where he obtained €300 million in investments for the Spanish *Cajas*—savings banks—by the Qatar Investment Authority. He also obtained deals on infrastructure, oil and gas. Qatar is the third-largest exporter of gas to Spain after Algeria and Nigeria. A deal with the United Arab Emirates means that its airports can now be used by Spanish troops as a layover between Madrid and Afghanistan.

Zapatero was the first European leader to visit the provisional Tunisian government. He met up with all the actors and parties that have blocked the masses from power, from Prime Minister Beyi Said Essebsi to Nejib Chebbi of the Progressive Democratic Party and Abdesslem Jrad of the General Union of Tunisian Workers (L'Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail—UGTT).

The Socialist Party was elected in 2004 as the undeserved benefactor of the massive anti-war movement that developed against the war in Iraq. Even though the PSOE was obliged to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq in 2004 due to mass opposition, Zapatero has not only continued to pursue the same imperialist line as his predecessor, the disgraced José Maria Aznar, but has involved Spanish forces in many more overseas deployments.

The number of Spanish troops in Afghanistan has risen from 540 in 2004 to 1,477, with Defence Minister Carmen Chacón promising to send more troops in the next months. Spain currently has 1,100 troops on the Lebanese frontier, sent in 2006 as part of the United Nations force. The Zapatero government also sent 370

troops, one frigate, one patrol boat and an air detachment to Djibouti in order to protect Spanish fishing interests and the geostrategic oil route to Spain in the Gulf of Aden, between Djibouti and Somalia, in 2009.

Last February, the president of the Spanish Congress, José Bono, led a delegation to Equatorial Guinea. The ex-colony of Spain is currently under one of the most brutal dictators in Africa, Teodoro Obiang, trained in Spain's Military Academy of Zaragoza. The visit was to promote Spanish businesses and to capitalise on its recent discovery of significant oil reserves.

Zapatero and his officials' frantic touring is also a response to the rapidly deteriorating economic situation of Spain. The trade deficit in January increased by 9.3 percent. Added to this is the admission by the Industry, Tourism and Trade Ministry that the deficit of energy products widened by 53.7 percent this year. This has led the Spanish government to enforce fuel efficiency measures such as reducing the speed limit on highways from 120 km/hour to 110 in order to cut fuel consumption.

The government is increasingly turning to military force to offset its declining economic position. A further determining factor pushing Zapatero to join the military attack on Libya is to divert attention from the enormous internal social tensions that have been exacerbated by his brutal austerity measures and that threaten an explosive movement of the working class against his government.

Latest figures show that unemployment is over 20 percent, 46 percent among the youth, and that 19.8 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.



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