

PSOE, Podemos send Spanish tanks to Ukraine for war with Russia

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29 January 2023

Last week, Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government announced that Madrid plans to send its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine. This comes after Germany agreed to send its own and allowed NATO allies to do the same, and the US announced that it would send 31 Abrams heavy tanks to Ukraine for war with Russia. This again shows that all the NATO powers are parties to war with Russia, risking an escalation into a global, nuclear conflict between Russia and NATO.

The PSOE-Podemos' decision recalls the darkest traditions of Spanish imperialism's alliance with Nazism against Russia. During World War II, the fascist regime of General Francisco Franco sent the Blue Division of 47,000 soldiers to Russia to thank Hitler for his support in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) to crush the working class. Eighty years after the Blue Division's oath to Hitler in July 1941 and its incorporation into the Wehrmacht as the 250th Division, Spanish and German tanks are again set to roll against Russia.

On Wednesday, Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles said: "Spain is willing, within this coordination, to work with our allies to do whatever is necessary including the sending of Leopards, training in the use of these Leopards and also to help in their maintenance and upkeep."

Last summer, the PSOE-Podemos government was the first to offer Leopard tanks to Ukraine. However, in August, Robles backed down, claiming the tanks were in an "absolutely regrettable" state and could not be used. In reality, Madrid backed down over Berlin's possible veto, as the European powers waited to see whether Washington would also provide tanks to Ukraine and offer full military support if Russia targeted Leopard deliveries for military strikes.

Deliveries are now underway, however. Spain owns one of the largest fleets of Leopards in the European Union (EU), with 347 tanks. Of these, 108 are the 2A4 model

that Madrid bought from Germany in the 1990s and which is the oldest currently in operation. The remaining 239 are of the more modern 2E version, manufactured in Spain.

Of the 108 2A4s that are operational, 54 are facing Morocco in Spain's north African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. The rest are mothballed and stored in Zaragoza. According to *El País*, at least 20 are in good condition, while many others would need tuning and refit.

Defence sources told *Público* that it will take a month and a half to get the tanks ready, plus another month to train the Ukrainian military. These would then be transported overland across Europe by flatbed trucks in a journey that would reportedly take about a week.

It is widely recognised that these tanks will need military and civilian contractors to maintain and repair them, along with the creation of supply chains for Spanish military components, stretching hundreds of miles from the eastern front to Spain. Robles confirmed this implicitly when she said that Spain would "help in their [Leopards'] maintenance and upkeep."

As the WSWS has warned, in these supply lines and reparations, NATO personnel will likely become targets of Russian attacks on the weapons systems flowing into Ukraine. The demand, first raised early in the war, for a no-fly zone will quickly be raised, in order to "save the lives" of NATO soldiers and contractors deployed in Ukraine.

This reckless war policy again exposes the pro-imperialist, anti-worker character of Podemos and its sister pseudo-left parties across Europe and internationally, like the German Green and Left Parties, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France, and the Democratic Socialists of America. All of these pseudo-left groups represent a privileged upper-middle-class stratum which forms the social basis for imperialist war.

Remarkably, while Podemos has recognized that the tanks will fuel the military escalation and threaten to

trigger a nuclear conflagration, it is also pledging to continue to support the war effort.

Social Rights Minister and Secretary General of Podemos Ione Belarra said sending tanks “would only contribute to the escalation of the war,” adding that “it could have an unpredictable and very dangerous response from Russia.”

Deputy Prime Minister and leader of Podemos in the Spanish government Yolanda Díaz called it “a qualitative leap in the weapons position that causes enormous concern in Spanish and European society.”

State Secretary for the 2030 Agenda, deputy spokesman for Podemos and general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) Enrique Santiago warned that that the conflict is “right now in a situation of catastrophic stalemate.” He admitted that the “military escalation” has a “high risk of atomic catastrophe.”

Podemos’ protestations are empty rhetoric, seeking to obscure its role as a member of an imperialist government at the forefront of the NATO war on Russia.

Even as it admits that its escalation could provoke nuclear war, Podemos is continuing with this criminally reckless policy.

Last Tuesday, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez told parliament Madrid has sent “dozens of shipments” of offensive equipment to Ukraine, “including 400 tons of ammunition, light weapons, anti-tank systems, an Aspide missile battery and six Hawk anti-aircraft systems.” He added that Madrid sent uniforms and equipment for the cold, sanitary equipment, generators, all-terrain light vehicles, ambulances and humanitarian aid. It is also offering medical treatment to wounded Ukrainian soldiers, while providing air defence training at an airbase in Toledo.

Terrified at mounting popular distrust of the war, Podemos carries out political stunts while reaffirming its commitment to Spanish imperialism. Hostile to any public debate on the war, Podemos refused to support the demands of even the pro-NATO Catalan nationalist Republican Left of Catalonia and the Basque separatist Bildu for a parliamentary vote on the sending of tanks. Similarly, it has opposed a vote on the agreement sealed in June 2021 between the US and Spain to increase the number of US destroyers at the Rota naval base from four to six.

With its stunts, Podemos aims to lull the public to sleep, hide the danger of a nuclear catastrophe and continue the war. This is widely recognised by the ruling class. *ElDiario.es* writes, “In Moncloa [Prime Minister’s

office], they appreciate that their government partner has not resorted, for the moment, to attitudes of frontal clashes and fiery criticism” over the tanks. It quotes an anonymous senior PSOE official who said: “They have a legitimate position and we appreciate that.”

Covering Spain’s aggressive role in NATO against Russia, Podemos is now promoting the farce that it is seeking a diplomatic solution while dispatching tanks to Ukraine. Belarra claimed, “It is time for Spain to lead a diplomatic and negotiated solution for the war in Ukraine and that this would be the most effective way to end the war … It is time to lead, change the correlation of forces and act.”

Insofar as the privileged petty-bourgeois operatives of Podemos claim they are trying to mount a peace policy, their dispatching of tanks to Ukraine shows they are lying through their teeth.

Stopping a catastrophic escalation that could lead to the atomisation of Spain and of Europe requires mobilizing the working class against Podemos and similar pseudo-left parties across NATO and internationally. The Stalinist and Pabloite operatives of Podemos and its sister parties have totally lost their heads. Terrified above all of mounting working class opposition to their reactionary policies, they are barreling, eyes firmly shut, towards nuclear Armageddon.

Building a movement in the European and international working class entails, however, a struggle for a politically conscious break with the petty-bourgeois class orientation and anti-Marxist traditions of Podemos. This signifies undertaking the struggle to build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Spain and internationally.



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