

Far-right Polish government threatens to halt new arms shipments to Ukraine

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On September 20, amid mounting tensions between the Polish and Ukrainian governments, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said Warsaw would send “no further weapons to Ukraine.” The statement, which seemed to directly contradict the NATO alliance’s policy of arming Ukraine to wage war with Russia, was denounced by ruling circles across Europe.

Yesterday, Polish President Andrzej Duda tried to downplay Morawiecki’s remarks. Referring to Poland’s massive rearmament program, which aims to devote 4 percent of its economy on defense and develop a 1,500-tank army, Duda said: “The prime minister only meant that we will not transfer to Ukraine the new weapons we are acquiring to modernize the Polish army.” Duda complained that Morawiecki’s remarks had been “interpreted in the worst possible way.”

In reality, Morawiecki’s threat undeniably reflected deep-rooted conflicts between Poland’s far-right Law and Justice (PiS) government and the NATO-backed regime of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, which are mounting amid the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

It came shortly after the Zelensky regime in Kiev sued the Polish government at the World Trade Organization (WTO) for imposing unilateral tariffs on Ukrainian grain exports. After the European Union (EU) lifted tariffs on Ukrainian grain amid the war in Ukraine, Poland, as well as Slovakia and Hungary, imposed unilateral tariffs last week to limit the collapse in grain prices for its farmers. Facing a Polish general election next month, the PiS hoped to maintain support among small farmers, who account for around 10-13 percent of Poland’s population.

After bringing his lawsuit against Poland at the WTO, Zelensky made further remarks aimed at Warsaw on Tuesday at the UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

To explain why NATO should escalate its war on Russia, Zelensky denounced not only on Russia but also NATO countries that, he charged, are insufficiently supportive of Ukraine. “It is impossible to stop this war because all efforts

are confronted with a veto by the aggressor or by those who support the aggressor,” Zelensky said. He attacked unnamed European countries which, he claimed, are “indirectly supporting Russia.”

Zelensky’s remarks immediately provoked a diplomatic crisis with the bitterly anti-Russian, far-right regime in Warsaw. The PiS government summoned Ukrainian Ambassador to Poland Vasyl Zvarych to denounce Zelensky’s insinuations that the PiS government had any sympathy for Russia. The Polish Foreign Ministry’s statement reported that Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski had conveyed a “strong protest” against Zelensky’s statement that “some EU countries feigned solidarity [with Ukraine] while indirectly supporting Russia.”

It added that “putting pressure on Poland in multilateral forums or sending complaints to international tribunals are not appropriate methods of resolving disputes between our countries.”

Polish officials went on, however, to criticize Ukraine’s catastrophic summer “counter-offensive,” which is estimated to have brought Ukraine’s death toll in the war to around 400,000. “Ukraine is behaving like a drowning person clinging to anything available,” Duda said. “A drowning person is extremely dangerous, capable of pulling you down to the depths ... simply drown the rescuer.”

Morawiecki, for his part, called for making no further new weapons deliveries to Ukraine. He added that the PiS government would focus “mainly on rapid modernizing and arming of the Polish army, so it becomes one of Europe’s most powerful land armies, and in a short time frame.” At the same time, he made clear that the PiS government is still committed to waging NATO’s war on Russia. He pledged that Warsaw would still allow NATO arms deliveries to Ukraine to pass through the Polish military base at Rzeszow, near the Polish border with Ukraine.

Major European Union (EU) governments and press outlets denounced the PiS for making any criticism, however limited, of NATO’s war with Russia.

Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* set the tone, bemoaning a "Breaking of the Dam in Poland" and writing: "It is breathtaking how the PiS government is making Ukraine a plaything of its electoral maneuvers. It reveals a narrow-minded view of Polish interests and cheapens Poland's previous stance on the war."

In France, where Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna criticized Polish statements as "regrettable" and dictated by "internal political considerations," the press also dismissed them as electioneering. In its editorial, the French daily *Le Monde* complained that "Poland has lost its way," adding: "Until now Ukraine's most solid ally, the Polish government is turning against Kiev for electoralist reasons. This tactic is dangerous for Ukraine and for Europe."

This line was echoed by Poland's main bourgeois opposition party, the pro-EU Civic Platform of former Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk. Tusk charged the PiS with a "moral and geopolitical scandal of stabbing Ukraine in the back politically ... just because it will be profitable for their campaign."

The PiS unquestionably pursues a far-right nationalist agenda hostile to the working class. Its rearmament campaign and its arming of the Zelensky regime have gone hand-in-hand with its impoverishment of Polish workers, as inflation hit 18 percent, and its establishment of kangaroo courts to try enemies of the state, such as those accused of sympathy for Russia. However, pro-EU forces' attempts to dismiss the Polish-Ukrainian conflict as just PiS electioneering are political lies.

The statements of Biden and Zelensky at the UN have made clear that, despite the bloody failure of Ukraine's "counter-offensive," NATO is committed to escalating war with Russia. Poland—which borders both the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus, a Russian-allied former Soviet republic—is on the front lines of this escalation. Quite independently of the intentions of the PiS government, such plans for a third, all-European world war raises explosive political issues.

Over 5 million people died in Poland in World War II, about one-sixth of its pre-war population, overwhelmingly at the hands of Nazi occupation forces. Poland was liberated from Nazi rule in 1944 by the Red Army. However, at the war's outset, Poland was divided between Germany and the Soviet Union, under the reactionary terms of the 1939 Stalin-Hitler Non-Aggression Pact. In this initial period of the war, Soviet NKVD secret police loyal to the Stalin carried out acts of mass murder in eastern Poland, such as the Katyn Forest massacre.

After Hitler launched his war of annihilation against the Soviet Union in 1941, moreover, Nazi SS units worked with Ukrainian Nazi-collaborationist forces led by Stepan

Bandera, who carried out a campaign of genocide aimed at both Jews and Poles.

The PiS, which itself contains neo-fascistic and antisemitic elements, has therefore felt compelled to issue limited protests of the NATO-backed Ukrainian regime's promotion of Bandera. In January, when Bandera's memory was hailed by the Ukrainian parliament and Ukrainian General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the PiS issued a statement euphemistically declaring that Bandera's commemoration "must raise objections."

These conflicts, together with the possibility that Poland could invade Ukraine to retake lands around Lviv in western Ukraine that were once controlled by Poland, underlie the current spat between Warsaw and Kiev.

They point to the historic bankruptcy of imperialism and Stalinism. The Stalinist regimes' restoration of capitalism in 1989-1991 has undeniably led to disaster. The former Soviet republics of Russia and Ukraine are fighting a fratricidal war stoked by the NATO imperialist powers. The parties that emerged from Polish Stalinism's 1989 restoration of capitalism are either open supporters of war with Russia or far-right advocates of Polish rearmament—a policy that only sets the stage for an even bloodier clash between NATO and Russia.

Capitalism's plunge into a new world war raises all the more forcefully the Marxist alternative to Stalinism posed by Leon Trotsky and his perspective to unify the European and international working class in revolutionary struggle against capitalism and Stalinist bureaucracies.

There is powerful opposition to the war and attacks on workers' living standards that serve to fund the war, including within Poland itself. In the recent period, Poland has seen a nationwide teachers strike, as well as mass protests against the PiS regime's anti-democratic establishment of courts to try those suspected of Russian sympathies. To avert a truly horrific military escalation between nuclear-armed powers, however, this opposition in the working class must be unified across national boundaries into an international movement against imperialism, war and capitalism.



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