

Pseudo-left rally behind Scottish National Party at anti-nuclear submarine rally

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An estimated 3,000 people gathered in George Square, Glasgow, Saturday, for a “Bairns (children) not Bombs” rally.

The protest speaks to broader anti-war sentiment. As vital social provision is being cut back through government-imposed austerity, the ruling elite in Britain and internationally squander billions on weapons of mass destruction in line with the resurgence of imperialist violence.

All the more venal then are the efforts by the organisers of Saturday’s protest to channel this opposition behind capitalist parties fully committed to militarism.

The demonstration was organised by the “Scrap Trident” coalition, a reference to Britain’s nuclear submarine programme, due for renewal next year at an estimated cost of up to £100 billion.

The coalition includes the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Quakers in Scotland, along with the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Scottish Green Party and the Radical Independence Convention (RIC). These pseudo-left tendencies champion Scottish nationalism and acted as the main foot soldiers for the Scottish National Party (SNP) in last September’s failed referendum on Scottish independence.

It is no surprise then that SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon took pride of place at the rally. Amid a sea of Saltire flags, Sturgeon denounced plans to renew Trident as “morally obscene” and “economically indefensible.”

The SNP has made the scrapping of Trident one of its central slogans. It complains that the nuclear programme, which is situated on the River Clyde just 40 miles from Glasgow, makes Scotland the target of a potential attack, either by unspecified hostile nations or terrorists.

But the SNP’s opposition to Trident is a cynical pose. Its real attitude to the growth of militarism is shown not by its stance on a single weapons programme but by its

decision, taken in 2012, to abandon its long-standing opposition to the NATO alliance.

The decision was a signal to the United States and the European Union that an independent Scotland could be relied on to safeguard imperialist interests. That is why, while the SNP make great play of the dangers posed to Scotland by the Trident programme, it says little about the threat it constitutes to the rest of the globe.

Four submarines—one of which is always at sea—each carry 40 nuclear warheads that can strike anywhere within a 7,000 mile radius. The explosive power of just one of these warheads is eight times greater than the US atomic bomb that devastated Hiroshima.

Not only does the SNP’s support for NATO, which is at the forefront of US and UK provocations against Moscow, make a mockery of its anti-war pose, but it is also actively participating in trying to stoke up tensions against Russia.

In a recent BBC *Question Time* programme, Sturgeon said she believed “Russia is potentially a threat.”

“The eye has been taken off that ball [the Russian threat]”, she complained, by the government’s “obsession with nuclear weapons.”

Meanwhile, SNP councillors are currently agitating for Glasgow to sever its ties with the Russian twin city of Rostov-on-Don over the crisis in eastern Ukraine. While remaining silent on the US and EU’s central role in backing last year’s right-wing putsch in Kiev, Glasgow council’s SNP group parrot official propaganda blaming Moscow for the civil war.

Susan Aitken, leader of the Glasgow council SNP group, said, “Where the national government of one of the twin cities behaves in a way that flagrantly breaches accepted international standards—as with President Putin’s actions in Ukraine in recent months—then the council really can’t simply stand by and remain silent.”

This is the main organisation that the pseudo-left are

promoting in Scotland as an anti-war party. But their deliberate misleading of working people is not confined to the SNP.

The Scrap Trident campaign is part of a wider attempt by these groups to conceal the advanced preparations for war and sow illusions that by building a “progressive alliance” across the political spectrum, the bourgeoisie can be made to see sense.

A series of protests are to be held in the run-up to the May 7 general election at the Ministry of Defence in London and the Faslane naval base, where the Trident missiles are located, in Scotland. The focus of these actions is to press MPs to vote against Trident’s renewal.

Patrick Harvie of the Scottish Greens told the Glasgow protest, “You need to take the message out day after day, to friends, family, your colleagues, your neighbours, make sure they bring the issue of Trident to the top of the political agenda when they [MPs] decide how they will cast their vote,” he said.

Labour MP Katy Clark also addressed the rally. The SNP’s stated opposition to Trident has not prevented it from making clear it will support a potential Labour administration after May 7, despite Labour leader Ed Miliband’s support for the nuclear programme.

Only in January, Labour joined with the Conservatives in parliament to crush a motion, sponsored by the Greens and the SNP, against Trident’s renewal. The motion was defeated by 364 votes to 35, with just 19 Labour MPs voting in favour.

In the wake of the defeat, CND, with the support of the pseudo-left, are attempting to rebuild parliament’s tattered credentials. On March 25, CND launched its “Vote out Trident” manifesto in Westminster, addressed by representatives of Labour, the SNP, Greens, the Welsh nationalist Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats.

To great fanfare, CND announced that a “survey of 500 parliamentary candidates across all major parties show 81 percent would vote against Trident replacement ...”

CND General Secretary Kate Hudson said the result was proof of the Conservatives’ “isolation”!

“Every other major party has expressed openness to engaging with the question of whether Britain really needs to spend £100 billion on a Cold War weapons system which senior military figures have described as completely useless,” she claimed.

Hudson is the national secretary of Left Unity. Fronted by film director Ken Loach, it was formed out of the detritus from various pseudo-left organisations. Its stated aim is to build a “broad left” coalition along the lines of

Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain.

Left Unity speaks of the need for Britain to be “independent” of the US, which is why it calls for withdrawal from NATO. But it bolsters the United Nations and the European Union as potential instruments for peace.

Hudson and CND are urging MPs from all political parties to sign up to a pledge stating, “I believe a security strategy and defence reviews must consider not replacing nuclear weapons, and will urge the government to fund *only conventional military equipment and postures*” (emphasis added).

This stance echoes the recent report by CentreForum, which last month issued its report, “Dropping the Bomb.” The think tank, whose board members include Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative MPs, described the replacement of Trident as “nonsensical.”

Author Toby Fenwick explained, “By scrapping Trident, the UK would be able to use the savings to increase the capacity of its conventional forces. It would also be able to improve significantly its medium term conventional strike capability through converting the *Vanguard* class submarines to carry conventionally armed missiles. Ultimately, investing in conventional forces will be far more effective in protecting the UK’s international status than replacing Trident.”

Only the Socialist Equality Party is standing in the election on a genuine anti-war platform. Our candidates, Katie Rhodes in Glasgow Central and David O’Sullivan in Holborn and St. Pancras, London, insist that the war danger can be defeated only by tackling its root cause in the profit system. They are standing in order to mobilise working people as part of a global revolutionary offensive against capitalism and for a socialist world.

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