

Kremlin instructs Russian industry to prepare for war mobilization

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Reports emerged yesterday in the British press that Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russian industry to be prepared to divert all its efforts into war production. After Germany's formal re-militarization of its foreign policy in 2014 and Sweden's reintroduction of the draft, this makes clear that, just over a century after the outbreak of World War I in 1914, countries across Europe and the world are again preparing for total war.

Putin reportedly made this remark at the Sochi summit, where he discussed the Syrian war with Turkish and Iranian officials. As he spoke, he was reviewing the Russian military's annual Zapad military exercise, which took place in September, with Russian army staff.

Putin said, "The ability of our economy to increase military production and services at a given time is one of the most important aspects of military security. To this end, all strategic and simply large-scale enterprise should be ready, regardless of ownership."

His remarks made clear that this year's Zapad exercise was designed to check whether Russia could sustain the all-out mobilization of its economic resources for large-scale nuclear war. The scenario of the exercise was for strategic nuclear forces to practice firing off their missiles—the country's largest hydrogen bombs, designed to obliterate a country who attacked Russia—amid mock foreign ground invasions and large-scale missile strikes against Russia.

In such a war, the military would take over the economy, slash production for civilian needs, and re-direct whatever industrial capacity survived mass air and missile raids towards the war effort.

Putin said, "First, we checked our mobilization readiness and ability to use local resources to meet the troops' requirements. Reservists were called up for this

exercise, and we also tested the ability of civilian companies to transfer their vehicles and equipment to the armed forces and provide technical protection to transport communications. ... We also assessed the provision of transport and logistics services, as well as food and medicines to the army. We need to review once again the defense companies' ability to quickly increase output."

Putin's remarks are an urgent warning to the international working class. Global capitalism is undergoing a historic political collapse. The danger of a Third World War, rooted in the conflict between the nation-state system and the global character of economic production, is imminent and growing. What Putin announced openly at the Sochi summit is what NATO governments are doing behind the backs of the people: preparing for all-out global war directly between the major nuclear powers and, if necessary, against their own population.

The chorus of attacks on Russia in the US and European media, denouncing its alleged aggression and interference in NATO countries' politics, are saturated with imperialist hypocrisy. While Russia is carrying out military exercises on its own soil, the NATO powers are encircling Russia and marching their troops up to Russia's very borders.

Two weeks ago, NATO held a summit in Brussels to discuss building naval and logistical bases to transport US and European troops across the Atlantic and the European continent to fight Russia. Reviewing the summit agenda, German news magazine *Der Spiegel* concluded, "In plain language: NATO is preparing for a possible war with Russia."

As in Russia, NATO officials are readying for such a war with plans to subordinate all social and economic life to the diktat of the banks and the military. At the

Brussels summit, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg made clear that NATO is also closely coordinating its war planning with the intelligence agencies, police and the banks. This planning, he said, “requires a whole-of-government approach. So it’s important that our defense ministers make our interior, finance and transport ministers aware of military requirements.”

Viewed from Moscow, US imperialism’s threats of aggressive military action around the planet resemble a noose being drawn around Russia. Nor are the threats concentrated on Russia’s western border with Europe. Since August, US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened North Korea, which borders both eastern Russia and China, with nuclear obliteration. After Trump went to Saudi Arabia in May and pressed Riyadh to take a harsh line against Iran and Syria, Russia’s main allies to the south in the Middle East, the region is on the verge of all-out war.

At the same time, Pentagon figures publicized earlier this week showed that US military and support personnel deployed to the Middle East suddenly surged 30 percent, to 54,325.

Humanity is being brought face to face with the disastrous political consequences of the dissolution of the USSR by the Stalinist bureaucracy over a quarter century ago, in 1991. The imperialist lies of the Cold War era, that the USSR was the source of military aggression in the world, were refuted by the imperialist onslaught that developed after its dissolution. Entire regions were devastated as the NATO powers attacked or occupied formerly Soviet-allied states—Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria—or isolated and economically strangled them, as in the case of North Korea.

These wars have not only cost millions of lives, but forced over 60 million people to flee their homes, creating the greatest refugee crisis since World War II.

The crisis revealed by Putin’s call for Russia to be prepared for total war is the outcome of these decades of brutal wars waged by the NATO powers around the world. Attempts by US imperialism to use its military might to offset its economic decline and channel outward class tensions driven by rising unemployment and social deprivation, in which Washington was abetted by its European allies, have brought the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust.

This is now publicly discussed at the highest levels of the bourgeois state. Last week, in the US Senate, Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey warned that plans could be in place, “right now in the White House, given to the president to launch a preemptive war against North Korea using American nuclear weapons without consulting with, informing Congress.” Another senator said the White House had become an “adult day care center” for an uncontrollable president, who could choose to launch a nuclear war virtually anytime.

The Kremlin’s policy, rooted in the bankrupt Russian nationalism of the post-Soviet capitalist oligarchy, is reactionary and incapable of opposing the imperialist war drive. Unwilling and unable to appeal to anti-war sentiment in the international working class, and financially dependent on the imperialist centers, the Kremlin oscillates between trying to cut deals with the NATO powers and risking an all-out military confrontation with them. Strategists clearly expect that such a conflict would likely escalate rapidly to large-scale nuclear war threatening the very survival of humanity.

There is no way to stop the drive to war outside a politically-conscious intervention by the working class, on an international scale, in revolutionary opposition to war and to capitalism. The greatest danger in this situation is that masses of workers are not fully aware of the depth of the political crisis and the rapidly rising danger of a catastrophic war.

It is under these conditions that, amid a campaign denouncing Russia in US and European media, governments are demanding stepped-up censorship of the Internet and social media, and Google is censoring anti-war and socialist web sites, first and foremost the *World Socialist Web Site*. This is why the WSWS calls for building an international anti-war movement in the working class and a socialist and anti-imperialist perspective, and asks for its readers’ support in spreading its materials against censorship and war.



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