

May Day 2022: UK signs up for front line in war against Russia

Chris Marsden
6 May 2022

This is the report delivered by Chris Marsden to the 2022 International May Day Online Rally held on May 1. Marsden is the national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the UK. To view all speeches, visit wsws.org/mayday.

No country is more desperate to be in the front ranks of the imperialist war drive against Russia than the UK.

At the beginning of April, Prime Minister Boris Johnson made sure he was the first NATO leader to visit Kiev, where he combined jibes against Germany with boasts of the vast array of weapons the UK had provided Ukraine.

Speaking alongside President Zelensky, he said Britain had raised weapons and equipment for Ukraine worth over £1.5 billion. One week later it was confirmed that SAS personnel are training Ukrainian soldiers “on ground” in the use of 3,600 UK-supplied anti-tank weapons.

Since the Maidan coup of 2014, tens of thousands in Ukraine’s army have been trained by Britain, which has led war games involving Ukraine in the Black Sea and elsewhere.

UK politicians are foremost in turning up the heat. This week, Defence Minister James Heappey threatened, “it is entirely legitimate to go after targets” on Russian soil. This prompted the servile BBC to comment, “The line between defending Ukraine and attacking Russia is increasingly blurred.”

Not blurred—obliterated.

Russia warned, “London’s direct provocation of the Kiev regime into such actions ... will immediately lead to our proportional response ...

“The Russian Armed Forces are in round-the-clock readiness to launch retaliatory strikes with high-precision long-range weapons at decision-making

centres in Kiev,” stressing that this is where UK representatives were located.

Major foreign policy issues dictate this agenda. The sun long ago set on the British empire. Its decline has pushed it into the arms of Washington, hoping to leverage slavish warmongering to boost its world position against Germany, France, and other rivals.

Julian Assange faces extradition to the US for the same reason, with Home Secretary Priti Patel to render a pre-determined verdict in May aimed at silencing the Wikileaks founder for exposing the war crimes of Washington and London.

But that is far from the whole picture. The turn to war is also animated by fear of a social explosion at home. The UK is a social and economic cesspit. A tiny layer of the global super-rich has gravitated to London as a haven for financial criminality and opulent living, while millions of working people eke out an ever more precarious existence.

This month, every household in Britain was hit by a massive 54 percent rise in energy bills, to be followed by a similar hike in October. With inflation hovering at 10 percent, UK households face a staggering £2,620 increase on bills and other costs.

People cannot live. The UK’s most popular financial adviser, Martin Lewis, has warned, “We need to keep people fed. We need to keep them warm. If we get this wrong right now, then we get to the point where we start to risk civil unrest.”

The *Sunday Times* drew the same conclusion, asking April 17, “Is Britain heading for the summer of discontent?” and warning, “There is a feeling that the balance of power weighted in favour of management for decades is beginning to shift.”

There is a potential strike wave brewing, with ballots by 40,000 rail workers, 40,000 BT (telecoms) workers,

university and school staff, and Post Office workers.

As in every country, British workers face the challenge of building new organisations of class struggle and a new political leadership to take their fight to the employers. They have been reduced to dire straits because the trade unions and the Labour Party have collaborated with a decades-long offensive by Britain's rulers.

In the trade unions, workers confront an enemy they are now beginning to take on openly, to end collusion with management in every workplace. They also need to be able to fight the high-level collusion of the trade unions and their political partner, the Labour Party, with the Conservative government.

During the pandemic, the Trades Union Congress supported Johnson's handing billions to the major corporations and then enforced his "return to work" agenda. Labour, first under Jeremy Corbyn and then Sir Keir Starmer, pledged only "constructive criticism" to defend the national interest.

Johnson's personal fate is now on the line over his attending illegal drinks parties during the UK's two lockdowns.

Starmer finally raises himself to his full height to demand his resignation. Not to reflect the hatred of millions for the man responsible for nearly 200,000 COVID deaths, who said they should continue to die in their thousands, and who unlawfully released infected NHS patients and transformed care homes into killing fields. Labour wants a Tory leader that can better impersonate Winston Churchill than the Eton-educated buffoon occupying Number 10.

Labour MP Chris Bryant warned in parliament "the prime minister may have to come to this House" and say, "We may have to consider offensive weaponry. We may have to consider British troops being put in a place of danger."

In addition, he would have to tell British workers, "To make further sacrifices because the economy is in a very difficult place, and the public finances are in a very difficult place." He continued, "At a moment of national and international crisis, we need a leader of completely and utterly unimpeachable moral authority."

There is no such leader in parliament's political gang of criminals, Starmer included.

The British working class must mobilise its collective

strength to defeat the Tories and Labour's shared agenda of austerity, mass infection and war. In so doing they will take their proper place in the worldwide struggle for socialism to which this May Day rally is dedicated.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact