

Britain's next prime minister Liz Truss says she is ready for global nuclear annihilation

Chris Marsden
25 August 2022

Liz Truss, foreign secretary and most likely the next Conservative prime minister of the UK, has declared that she would launch a nuclear strike on Russia, even though the result would be “global annihilation.”

During a Tory Party leadership hustling in Birmingham Tuesday to determine who will replace Boris Johnson, John Pienaar of *Times Radio* told Truss that if she became prime minister, she would be quickly shown the procedures for launching nuclear missiles from Britain's Trident submarines. “It would mean global annihilation,” Pienaar said. “I won't ask you if you would press the button, you'll say yes, but faced with that task I would feel physically sick. How does that thought make you feel?”

With dead eyes and an emotionless expression, Truss replied, “I think it's an important duty of the Prime Minister and I'm ready to do that.”

“I'm ready to do that,” she repeated, soliciting a round of applause from the assembled Tories.

Truss's robotic and instantaneous reply must sound a warning to workers throughout the world as to how close we now stand to nuclear Armageddon.

She speaks as one of the foremost hawks among the NATO powers in supporting the proxy war against Russia being waged by the Ukrainian regime and a leading propagandist for direct military conflict with Moscow. In February, Russian President Vladimir Putin put Russia's nuclear forces on high alert, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov citing “unacceptable” remarks “by various representatives at various levels” about possible “clashes” between NATO and Moscow: “I would not call the authors of these statements by name, although it was the British foreign minister.”

Truss had recently told *Sky News*, “If we don't stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat: the Baltics, Poland, Moldova, and it could end up in a conflict with NATO.”

But Truss also speaks on behalf of the entire British ruling class. Not only would her leadership rival Rishi Sunak have also replied in the affirmative, but so would any other member of the UK political establishment seeking the

country's highest office.

Ever since tensions with Russia and China began to be ratcheted up by London and Washington, it has become necessary to openly declare a readiness to start a nuclear war. This began in 2015, when Jeremy Corbyn first won leadership of the Labour Party, above all based on his opposition to the Iraq war and leadership of the Stop the War Coalition. When asked in an interview on September 15, 2015 whether he would instruct the UK's defence chiefs to use the Trident nuclear weapons system if he became prime minister, Corbyn said no. He came under relentless attack, with the Tories, Blairites and military figures declaring him unfit for office, and he capitulated on all fronts.

In a July 18, 2016 debate, then-newly installed Tory Prime Minister Theresa May declared her own readiness to launch a nuclear strike framed as an attack on Corbyn. Corbyn's replacement as Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, was also asked by the BBC on February 10 this year whether he would be willing to use nuclear weapons and replied, “Of course.” This was just 14 days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Starmer was speaking following a meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, on which he commented, “Whatever challenges we have with the government, when it comes to Russian aggression we stand together.”

This is the broader international significance of Truss's declaration for nuclear war. Not only is this the policy of British imperialism. It is the policy being actively pursued by all the NATO powers, led by the US.

The NATO summit in Madrid, Spain in June adopted a strategy document outlining plans to militarize the European continent, massively escalate the war with Russia, and prepare for war with China. It pledged specifically to “deliver the full range of forces” needed “for high-intensity, multi-domain warfighting against nuclear-armed peer-competitors.”

Russia and China were named respectively as a “threat” and a “challenge” to “our interests.” NATO's “nuclear

deterrence posture”, centred on US nuclear weapons “forward-deployed in Europe” is placed at the centre of a strategy to “deter, defend, contest and deny across all domains and directions”.

NATO military figures already feel free to openly discuss waging nuclear war. At a symposium in June, the head of the German Luftwaffe, Ingo Gerhartz, declared, “For credible deterrence, we need both the means and the political will to implement nuclear deterrence, if necessary,” before adding, “Putin, don’t mess with us!” On August 13, Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, the former commanding officer of the UK’s Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Regiment, wrote in the *Telegraph* to insist, “Britain should prepare for nuclear war.”

Truss translated these discussions into the fascistic barks and grunts that have made her the darling of the Tory Party.

How must workers respond to such political insanity?

Modern nuclear weapons are far more powerful than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Just 50 could kill 200 million people, the combined populations of Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Germany. But that would only be the beginning. Modelling by Rutgers University predicts that a full-scale nuclear war would ignite massive fires and soot clouds that would block the Sun and devastate crops. An ensuing nuclear ice age would mean starvation for three-quarters of people and kill up to five billion within two years. Even a “smaller” nuclear conflict would likely lead to 2.5 billion deaths.

It is firstly necessary to accept that which was long thought to be the unthinkable: The imperialist powers are actively considering the use of weapons that would destroy humanity and possibly all life on earth. A WSWS Perspective column March 26 by Joseph Kishore and David North accurately described this as “Crossing the psychological Rubicon.” It warned of the Ukraine conflict: “The world is being taken to the brink of a nuclear catastrophe by the US and other major NATO power governments whose leaders are making decisions in secret while concealing the real geopolitical and economic interests in whose behalf they are acting.”

Secondly, the root causes of the war must be understood. What is taking place is a redivision of the world by the major imperialist powers. The US and European governments are not responding to an “unprovoked” act of Russian aggression. They are seeking to complete a policy of military encirclement pursued since the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, preparatory to bringing down the Putin regime and taking control of Russia’s vast resources on behalf of finance capital.

The only social force that can halt this catastrophic eruption of imperialist military violence is the international working class, by waging a struggle against capitalism and

for socialism. In its 2022 Congress resolution, “Mobilize the working class against imperialist war!” the Socialist Equality Party in the United States explains:

At its most fundamental level, imperialist war arises out of the basic contradictions of the capitalist system—between a global economy and the division of the world into rival nation-states, in which private ownership of the means of production is rooted. These same contradictions, however, produce the objective basis for world socialist revolution. Already, the consequences of the war are enormously intensifying social conflicts within the United States. The impact of soaring inflation is driving class struggle, including the eruption of strikes and protests among autoworkers, airline workers, health care workers, educators, service workers and other sections of the working class.

This holds true internationally. In the UK, for example, a strike wave is growing that can sweep Truss and the Tories from office.

What is required in every country is that workers wage the class struggle based on a socialist programme, mobilising against war and against all efforts by the ruling class, its governments and parties, and the trade union bureaucracy to make them pay for war through wage cuts, job losses and speedups. Above all, workers must reach out consciously to their class brothers and sisters to wage a common fight against the common enemy. The issues could not be more starkly posed: world war and nuclear annihilation, or world socialist revolution.



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