

In Prague, French President Macron repeats call to send European troops to Ukraine

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Yesterday, French President Emmanuel Macron traveled to the Czech capital for talks on nuclear energy and on escalating the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

Polls show mass popular opposition in Europe, by 68 percent of French people and 80 percent of Germans, to Macron's call to send European troops to fight Russia in Ukraine. It comes after German army plans were revealed to send long-range Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine for strikes on targets in Russia. Nonetheless, Macron doubled down on these staggeringly reckless proposals, which open the path to escalation to World War III between NATO and Russia, including the use of nuclear weapons.

At a press conference with Czech President Petr Pavel, he said: "My comments were clear, thought out, and precise. ... For two years we have repeated at each press conference that war has returned to European soil. We have revealed how much military materiel we have already delivered, how much we have already spent. Is this our war, or isn't it?"

In fact, an overwhelming majority of the French people does not think it is their war. Macron contemptuously dismissed public opinion, however, instead calling to intensify France's existing partnership with the United States and the Czech Republic to send artillery and shells to Ukraine. He said, "We are at a time in Europe where it is fitting not to be cowardly."

Macron admitted that his policy risks nuclear war but cynically blamed this on Russian President Vladimir Putin. He said, "Who is threatening, whatever we say or do, to use nuclear weapons? President Putin. All of you, turn to him and ask him what his strategic limits are. But if each day we explain what our limits are, faced with someone who has none and who started the war, I can tell you, defeatism is stalking us. ... [Be] careful about the message that is stalking us."

What is "stalking" Macron and other NATO leaders?

The Ukrainian puppet regime they armed against Russia is suffering a military debacle, with hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians dead and the Ukrainian army in retreat after having lost Avdiivka. Moreover, as all of them know their plans to escalate the war face explosive popular opposition.

But nonetheless, they are conspiring to intensify attacks on Russia, gambling that the Kremlin may ultimately be intimidated and back down. Macron's admission that he does not know Putin's strategic limits for the use of nuclear weapons—like his call not to state what strategic limits the European powers might have—only underscores the staggering recklessness of this policy.

Macron's attempt to blame the war entirely on Russian aggression is a lie, flagrantly contradicted by his comments on sending European ground troops to fight Russia in Ukraine. Indeed, he cited the many escalations NATO countries have carried out in their arms deliveries to Kiev, none of which resulted in Russian military action against NATO. On this basis, he argued that Russia will not decide on how the war escalation proceeds—that is, that the NATO imperialist powers, not Russia, are driving the war.

Macron said, "At each step over the last two years, people said, if you send tanks, there will be retaliation. If you send planes, there will be retaliation. If you send medium-range artillery shells, there will be retaliation. We all did all of that, after having all said that we would not. ... The pace of escalation is not defined by the Russian side, it is defined by a consensus between everyone."

This amounts to claiming that Putin, who has warned that further NATO escalation risks civilization-ending nuclear war, is just bluffing. While he tells the public that Russian aggression is responsible for the war, Macron asserts without any proof that Russia will not take drastic action and that a consensus between the NATO powers will be able to control the extent of whatever escalation

they provoke. But there is no justification for this complacent argument.

The media is fully complicit in the NATO leaders' moves to hide the danger of total war from the public. None of the journalists at Macron's press conference with Pavel asked what he would do if the Kremlin responded to launches of German Taurus or French SCALP missiles from inside Ukraine by bombing Berlin or Paris. Nor did any of them ask how many millions of French lives Macron plans to risk in the escalation he is unleashing.

It is known, however, that one Russian RS-28 intercontinental ballistic missile, carrying 15 nuclear warheads of a total explosive power of up to 50 million tons of TNT, can obliterate a territory the size of France, the EU's largest country by surface area, or the US state of Texas.

While Macron assured his audience that a "consensus" between the NATO powers can control the war, the mounting divisions between the imperialist powers were on display at the Prague summit, notably between France and Germany.

Macron spent much of his time in Prague promoting the French state electricity monopoly EDF's offer to build nuclear plants in the Czech Republic. Prague is at the center of French plans to export EDF nuclear plants across Eastern Europe, a region in which German capital is economically dominant—from Poland to Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. During Macron's visit to Prague, Czech officials signed a deal with French firm Orano (formerly Areva) to obtain uranium for their nuclear plants.

Macron pointed to substantial tensions between Paris and Berlin around this initiative. He hailed the Czech Republic for its role in the 12-country "European nuclear alliance," that included Poland, the Netherlands and Sweden. Formed last year, this alliance successfully opposed Berlin's efforts to block the designation of nuclear energy as a low-carbon energy source in EU green energy legislation. Macron said, "It's not just about energy, it's not just about business. It's clearly about strategy, autonomy. ... We have to face climate change and decarbonize our economy."

He boasted, "The French strategy is based on more efficiency, more renewables, more nuclear. This strategy today is the European one."

The problem of climate change cannot be resolved within the bankrupt framework of the capitalist nation-state system however. The most powerful states are not cooperating to resolve the climate crisis but are waging

war on each other.

There is deep-rooted opposition among workers and youth to the military escalation Macron and other NATO heads of state are setting into motion. The opposition of the vast majority of the German and French people is one sign. It is also worth recalling that polls in 2015 found that only 29 percent of French youth would accept fighting for their country, while 62 percent wanted to participate in a mass uprising.

Workers and youth across Europe and internationally must be alerted to the danger of catastrophic military escalation and mobilize against it. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in its statement yesterday, "US-NATO risks nuclear war with plans for attacks on Russia:"

The *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the conspiracy by US-NATO imperialism to drag mankind into a nuclear catastrophe. Power has to be taken out of the hands of these warmongers. Their actions are threatening human civilization with destruction.

Mass protests must be organized in every country to demand the total withdrawal of all NATO forces from Ukraine and an immediate end to the conflict. This must be connected to the development of an anti-imperialist movement in the international working class, to counter capitalist barbarism with the program of world socialist revolution.



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