

Stop Starmer's escalating war against Russia! Build a socialist anti-war movement!

Chris Marsden
22 November 2024

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's Labour government has dragged Britain to the point of an all-out war with Russia, with devastating consequences.

By agreeing to Ukraine firing Storm Shadow cruise missiles into Russian territory, he has made a de facto declaration of war without so much as a debate in parliament. His Defence Secretary John Healey had the gall to tell parliament's defence committee that "in the end the only one that benefits from such a public debate is President Putin."

Labour can refuse a public discussion on a war for which there is no popular support because parliament is a cesspit, populated by MPs who function as a single party of war determined to pursue British imperialism's predatory interests even at the risk of nuclear conflict.

In the aftermath of President Biden authorising US missile attacks by Ukraine that led to the use of ATACMS Tuesday, and an unconfirmed number of UK Shadow Storm missiles fired into Kursk Wednesday, President Vladimir Putin made clear Russia views this as the direct participation of the US and Britain in a war against Russia.

In a televised address Thursday, he specifically warned of an attack on US and UK military assets: "We have the right to use our weapons against military facilities of those countries which allow their weapons to be used on our facilities," he said. "And in case of escalation of aggressive actions, we will respond resolutely in a mirror way."

Putin confirmed Russia's firing of a "non-nuclear hypersonic version of a ballistic missile" that hit a Ukrainian missile and armaments complex in the city of Dnipropetrovsk. The new missile was chosen because its payload is exclusively associated with nuclear-capable missiles and because, Putin asserted, "There are currently no ways of counteracting this weapon. The missiles attack targets at a speed of 10 Mach, that's 2.5-3 km per

second."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has denounced a US missile base in Poland at Redzikowo as a "priority target for potential destruction." But Russia's retaliatory threat is much wider. US officials said that an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) has a range of 3,000-5,500 km (1,860-3,415 miles)—making the whole of Europe and Britain a potential target.

To this, Britain's government and opposition parties united behind one demand—escalate the war!

Starmer told parliament on Thursday, "We will not be deterred or distracted by reckless threats... we will back Ukraine with what is needed for as long as it is needed."

He praised Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch for supporting him, welcoming "the continued unity across the House... If we divide on the issue, the only winner will be Putin and I am not prepared to let that happen."

The same response came from the armed forces. Rob Magowan, deputy chief of the British defence staff, told parliament's defence committee, "If the British Army was asked to fight tonight, it would fight tonight. I don't think anybody in this room should be under any illusion that if the Russians invaded Eastern Europe tonight, then we would meet them in that fight."

The expelled former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn politely asked Starmer, "What pathway does he see to bringing about a cessation" of the conflict. On X/Twitter, he demanded that Starmer make a statement confirming whether UK missiles have been fired into Russia and "tell the British public if this means we are now at war with a nuclear power, what risk this poses to people in Britain, and why this action was taken without any approval from Parliament."

But he failed to make these demands in Westminster and no one else did either.

Corbyn does not even speak for the whole of the Socialist Campaign Group he once led in opposing war against Russia. His former shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, leads several members of the group who have long demanded the stepping-up of UK arms supplies to Ukraine, not an end to the conflict, and who have now had their wishes granted!

Corbyn's refusal to drive the Blairites out of the Labour Party is primarily responsible for putting the vile warmonger Starmer in Number 10. Moreover, he heads the Stop the War Coalition which has all but ignored the Ukraine war and its dangers for over a year, and which has walled off the millions who have protested the Gaza genocide from a broader struggle against imperialist-backed war.

The Stop the War Coalition has made a pro-forma protest against Starmer and Biden "for delaying possible diplomatic solutions" and "taking us to the edge of a wider war between nuclear armed great powers." But as with its constant appeals for the British government to back a ceasefire in Gaza, Stop the War ends with a pathetic call for "Starmer and Biden to stop these provocations immediately and to focus on securing a negotiated end to the war."

The escalation of the conflict in Russia and Ukraine takes place amid rising threats of the Gaza genocide and attacks on Lebanon and Syria becoming a full-blown war with Iran and rising tensions with North Korea—at least nominally targeted in Kursk—and with China. The global spread of war is rooted in a deepening crisis of world capitalism that drives the imperialist powers to a struggle for global hegemony that has already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in Ukraine and led to mass murder and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. In the fight against this, the future of humanity is at stake.

Stop the War and the pseudo-left and Stalinist tendencies that make up the coalition oppose the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class internationally that alone can bring an end to war. The same conditions giving rise to war drive the ruling class into ever more direct and brutal conflict with workers, who must be made to pay for it. But everything depends on the struggles that will erupt against militarism, austerity and right-wing reaction being armed with a socialist and internationalist perspective and leadership.

A year of mass protests against the murderous assault by Israel on the Palestinians—with the active backing of London, Washington, Berlin and Paris—that confined workers and young people to pressure "on the streets" for

a reversal of government policy drove them into a political dead end. The Tories have been replaced by a Labour government equally committed to genocide and now working in unison for a war against Russia whose consequences are yet more devastating.

The Socialist Equality Party and our comrades in the International Committee of the Fourth International call for the building of a socialist anti-war movement based on the international working class, the great revolutionary force in society.

This must be waged as a political offensive by workers against British imperialism and its Labour government, and in defiance of trade union leaders who support NATO, genocide and war just as surely as does Starmer. They systematically sabotage and betray every development of the class struggle that threatens to cut across the drive to subordinate social and economic life to the dictates of trade and military war.

A rank-and-file rebellion of workers is required, combining a struggle in defence of living standards with a political struggle against imperialism. This is inseparable from the resolute defence of social and democratic rights because the ruling class cannot wage war abroad, nor impose the vast attacks on jobs, wages and essential services this demands by democratic means. This is why opposition to war is being criminalized everywhere, including in Ukraine, where Trotskyist youth leader Bogdan Syrotyuk was arrested because he fought to unify workers in Russia and Ukraine against the conflict.

Workers must understand that the fight against war is a fight against capitalism and for socialism, requiring a struggle to put an end to the dictatorship of finance capital and the capitalist economic system. The SEP urges all those workers and young people who recognise this fundamental truth to join this party.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact