

# No to Starmer's war and austerity government—fight for socialism!

Socialist Equality Party (UK)

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British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's call for a "Coalition of the Willing" against Russia in Ukraine, with "boots on the ground and planes in the air" and a massive increase in military spending, confirms the Labour Party is ruling as a militarist cabal, the most right-wing and authoritarian government in post-war British history.

Starmer is determined to prevent a peace deal in Ukraine, is drenched in the blood of the Palestinians and seeking to impose savage attacks on the working class to fuel a forced march to war with catastrophic consequences. The burning question facing British workers is how to begin a counter-offensive against this party of warmongers and social vandals.

Donald Trump's presidency marks a watershed in world politics. His efforts to overturn the constitution and establish a dictatorship in the world's leading imperialist country have upended all the old relations between the imperialist powers established following the Second World War. Trump views Europe as a rival to be defeated through an escalating trade war, while threatening to break up NATO unless member states hike up their military spending.

Europe's governments have responded to this "America First" economic and military policy with an eruption of militarism and nationalism. The naked assertion of colonial domination by Trump—from Gaza to Yemen and Ukraine—is pushing all imperialist leaders to prepare their own campaign of military and neo-colonial aggression: a rearmament drive without precedent since the measures undertaken by Hitler prior to World War II.

## Starmer stokes the fires of war in Ukraine

Following Trump's election, Starmer, alongside France's President Macron, has become the chief advocate for preparing Europe to wage war against Russia.

The fact is acknowledged by the *New York Times*: "The crisis has transformed Mr. Starmer, turning a methodical, unflashy human rights lawyer and Labour Party politician into something akin to a wartime leader." Its reporters interviewed the Labour leader during a propaganda visit to the H.M.S. Vanguard submarine that launches Britain's Trident nuclear missiles.

Starmer's plans for the deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine and the continued supply of weapons to Kiev are aimed at either scuppering an agreement to end to the war in Ukraine or creating the pretext for resumed hostilities.

The Labour leader knows that Russia cannot accept a NATO presence within Ukraine. Its invasion was undertaken in response to plans to incorporate Ukraine into the structures of NATO and the European Union (EU), bringing the military alliance onto a strategically crucial section of

Russia's border. Asked by the *i* newspaper if he was willing to confront Russia's military in the event of a breach of a ceasefire, Starmer replied: "The point of the security arrangements is to make it clear to Russia there'll be severe consequences if they are to breach any deal."

## The lie of an imminent Russian invasion

Russia is portrayed by Starmer, Macron, Germany's next Chancellor Merz and other European leaders as being on the verge of invading Europe. This turns reality on its head. They are raising the spectre of a Russian invasion only in order to justify their own planned military aggression.

In three years of costly conflict, Russia has confined itself to the goal of securing Crimea and Ukraine's eastern regions. It has neither the capacity nor the intention to invade Europe. Russia's military doctrine as it applies to hostilities with the European powers is not to wage a land war, but to mount a nuclear response to any European military aggression—an existential threat Europe's leaders dismiss as bluster.

It is the European powers, not Putin, who have repeatedly raised the prospect of war with Russia. It was a head of the British Army, General Sir Patrick Sanders, who spoke in 2018 about the need "to project land capability over distances of up to some 2,000 km... For example we are copying what the Germans did very well in 1940," referring to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.

This week, the EU issued a *White Paper for European Defence—Readiness 2030*. Poland's Donald Tusk declared, "By 2030 Europe must be, in terms of army, weapons, technology, clearly stronger than Russia. And it will be." Starmer's spokesman stressed regarding Ukraine, "Clearly thousands of troops will be required to support any deployment whether that is at sea, on land or in the air."

## Labour takes up the anti-Russian standard of British imperialism

With Starmer's ascendancy to leadership, Labour has placed itself unambiguously in a line of continuity with British imperialism's most ruthless representatives, Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher.

His party has taken on the unvarnished hostility towards Russia which has occupied the British ruling class for centuries, the overriding source of which is that Russia was home to the first successful overthrow of capitalism by the Bolsheviks in 1917—a revolution which inspired a wave of anti-colonial struggles that shattered the British Empire.

Today, long after the Stalinist bureaucracy completed the

counterrevolutionary restoration of capitalism, British imperialism's ideologues marry these festering anti-communist sentiments to a predatory imperialist agenda necessarily targeting Putin's oligarchic nationalist regime.

The British ruling class initially saw the cultivation of the emerging Russian oligarchy as a pathway to a share of Russia's riches. But as the premier ally of US imperialism, London enthusiastically backed the political turn made by Washington towards direct confrontation with Russia that first came to a head in the 2014 Maidan coup and then erupted into all-out war in 2022.

With US imperialism deciding it was no longer satisfied with the Russian oligarchy's control of the vast resources of the former Soviet Union and setting out to reconquer territories lost to direct imperialist exploitation, Britain jumped to take up the role of its attack dog.

Churchill—whose declared aim was to "strangle Bolshevism in its cradle"—in the immediate aftermath of World War II urged the US to wage war against the Soviet Union using former Nazi troops to do so. Today Starmer occupies himself with an appeal to the Trump administration to provide a military "backstop" for the European military alliance against Moscow he is seeking to organise.

### Starmer's government of war and austerity

Against the pseudo-left groups backing a Labour vote during last year's general election, the Socialist Equality Party warned that the snap general election had been called:

to create the political framework for a new stage in a European-wide war that demands a major confrontation with the working class and young people... what is being concealed from the public gaze is the active and advanced preparation for a Labour government to drag Britain into a war that would see the atrocities of Gaza multiplied a thousand-fold.

With the Tory government mired in crisis, amid its murderous handling of the pandemic and growing militancy in the working class, Starmer offered Labour's services to the Biden administration as a reliable vehicle for the pursuit of the proxy war with Russia in Ukraine, while pacifying social opposition at home. "The post-war era is over," he declared. "This Labour Party is totally committed to the security of our nation. To our armed forces. And, importantly, to our nuclear deterrent."

The Labour Party is engaged in a policy that threatens the world with catastrophe. It demands an assault on the working class unprecedented since the 1930s.

Starmer has already announced a hike in military spending to 2.5 percent of GDP by 2027 paid for by cutting foreign aid funding—as an initial step towards 3 percent and beyond. This was followed by the plans to slash £6 billion of welfare payments and billions more cuts in the Spring Statement. But this is only a downpayment on what is to come.

War means the militarisation of the economy and gutting social spending on welfare, local services, education and the National Health Service and this cannot be carried out through democratic means. Like rearment in the 1930s, war today will be accompanied by a shift to the dictatorial forms of rule pioneered by Trump in the US. This is prefigured by Starmer's deploying police-state measures against those protesting the Gaza genocide.

### Corbyn and the Labour left offer no opposition

A fight against the Labour government cannot be waged under the leadership of the Labour "left" or the trade unions. Starmer's cabinet of warmongers and Thatcherite ideologues were handed leadership of the Labour Party by Jeremy Corbyn and his allies. Elected party leader in 2015, Corbyn had a massive popular mandate to drive out the Blairites, pursue a peaceful foreign policy and reverse the decades of attacks on workers' living standards by taking on the Tory government.

Instead, Corbyn capitulated to his opponents at every turn, signing up to supporting NATO, increased military spending and renewing the Trident nuclear deterrent while instructing Labour councils to implement Tory cuts. He and hundreds of his supporters were driven out of the party on bogus charges of antisemitism without any opposition being mounted.

Now an independent MP, Corbyn rejects any proposal to build a party independent of Labour. Whether on Gaza, war in Ukraine, or savage spending cuts, his response is to appeal for Starmer to change course. Most of his former allies who are still in the party, led by his shadow chancellor John McDonnell, support Starmer's "Slava Ukrainsi" rhetoric and limit themselves to mealy-mouthed protests against cuts.

The Corbyn experience proves that the Labour Party cannot be reformed. It must be broken with.

Neither can the trade union bureaucracy be pressurised into waging a fight for the working class. Having kept the Tories in office for 14 years through the suppression of the class struggle, the unions today are corporatist partners of the Starmer government and big business.

### For an international socialist anti-war movement!

The answer to Starmer's agenda of war and austerity is the systematic escalation of the class struggle against his government. Labour's war policy carried out on behalf of British imperialism must be confronted by the workers and young people whose lives are being ruined and who face the prospect of death on an unimaginable scale.

Mass opposition has already found initial expression in the millions-strong protests against the Gaza genocide and the strike wave that erupted against the Tory government in 2022-23. But the Corbynites and their pseudo-left allies confining workers and young people to exerting pressure "on the streets" for a reversal of government policy has allowed Israel's genocide to continue, while the trade union bureaucracy's betrayals have paved the way for Starmer's Labour government to implement an identical agenda to the Tories.

The Socialist Equality Party and our sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International call for the building of a new socialist anti-war movement based on the international working class.

A rank-and-file rebellion must be developed against the trade union bureaucrats policing the drive to war and social reaction. The fight against war is a fight against capitalism and for socialism and this demands the building of a new working-class leadership.

Those who want to wage such a struggle against Starmer and his defenders should take the decision to join the Socialist Equality Party.



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