

Workers and students in Britain condemn Trump's invasion of Venezuela, Starmer's warmongering and authoritarianism

“We need to learn from the 1930s.”

Our reporters
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The US operation in Venezuela ordered by the would-be dictator Donald Trump has elicited concern and anger among workers and youth in Britain.

Not so much as a pale reflection of this has been shown in the protests organised by the Stop the War Coalition under the figurehead of Your Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, attended by a few hundred people. These were called as bankrupt appeals to Keir Starmer's government of warmongers—already reviled as genocide defenders in Gaza—“to stand up to Trump” and defend international law.

On Saturday, a Socialist Equality Party campaign stall outside the Town Hall in Sheffield, South Yorkshire attracted workers and youth for discussions and to take copies of the leaflets: “Oppose Trump's criminal invasion of Venezuela! Release Maduro!”, and “Venezuela and Ukraine highlight bankruptcy of Britain's anti-war movement”.

A retired university canteen worker said, “It is appalling what happened in Venezuela. Trump is a dictator. He is implementing a plan for the US to take control of the world's resources. No one is prepared to stop him. The war against Russia is also about resources, especially those in Ukraine. Governments don't care about dictators, only resources. We can't sleepwalk into war and fascism again. We need to learn from the 1930s.”

A student criticised the “single issue politics” he associated with the “Western left”.

Two British Asian women active in the pro-Palestinian campaign said, “these issues are all connected: Venezuela, Gaza, the attack on free speech”. After an initial discussion challenging the idea that Ukraine was the “good war”, they agreed, “It is all about Empire”.

Like many others who stopped, they condemned the killing of mother of three Renee Good in Minneapolis by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. From

Trump to Starmer “they are calling us all domestic terrorists”, they said, a reference to the banning of Palestine Action last July and the arrest of 2,700 for protesting this anti-democratic outrage.

The WSWWS also spoke with a cross-section of workers and students who are readers and supporters. They condemned the state violence by Trump against Venezuela and inside the US, the Starmer government's warmongering against Russia in Ukraine and repression of protests. And they addressed the need for a perspective to mobilise the power of the international working class against the descent into criminality and war.

Ricky, a former refuse worker and safety rep in Coventry, said, “It's clear as day Trump invaded Venezuela for its natural resources, not only the oil but also silver and gold. It is even more naked than Iraq in 2003 when the US and Britain concocted the lies about Weapons of Mass Destruction.

“Venezuela and Latin America are the immediate target, but Trump has said it is about controlling the Western Hemisphere, directed against China and Russia. No one wants World War III. People are warning about this across social media.

“Keir Starmer has shown his fealty to Trump; why would he stand up for international law? He is guilty of breaking it over Gaza, arming the genocide against the Palestinians.

“The killing of Renee Good was shocking. I follow Instagram: the way these ICE agents act, they can kill with impunity and are masked up. It is like the darkest days of history and the Nazis in the 1930s and 40s. She has been labelled a ‘domestic terrorist’ by Trump and Vance. She was entirely innocent; that was her street and neighbourhood she was looking out for, to monitor ICE so people could go about their daily lives.

“Starmer banned Palestine Action as ‘terrorist’. Really!

That is for raising people's awareness, telling you where your taxes are going and protesting to block arming Israel. How can it be that it is 'terrorist' to oppose war?

"These wars, including Ukraine, are about resources. It is the working class and poor that will pay, to make the rich more wealthy and powerful. There is a lot of anger, but people need to step back and take a hard look at what is taking place. I was talking to a friend, and he was saying we need a revolution.

"This is the crux of it for me. This censorship and repression, it's because of the feelings among the working classes towards revolution and civil unrest against social inequality.

"There has been what I call the 'Great Distraction'—the scapegoating of immigrants for all the problems created by the wealthy few, by Labour, and Farage's Reform UK supported by Trump. This is to turn your head the other way while the rich plunder everything.

"We need to stand up together. We need standard bearers to take up the fight to give the confidence to everyone who feels things are wrong but are more hesitant and don't know how to express their opposition."

Mike, a building worker from Manchester, also condemned the US action against Venezuela: "Trump is a capitalist billionaire and he wants Venezuela's oil. He wants to take control of their oil and then he'll go after all of South America and Cuba. He's an imperialist.

"They are behaving like Al Capone, Chicago in the 1920s. Starmer is Trump's lapdog; he's weak, he'll go along with anything.

"They want Russia's and China's markets. This is a very dangerous time—militarism and gangsterism!"

Asked about the connection between war abroad and oppression by governments at home, Mike said, "They're letting the [pro-Palestinian, anti-genocide] hunger strikers die. They're not even mentioning it on the mainstream media. They're behaving like fascists."

Mike spoke about the need for a general strike, but warned, "100 years ago in Britain it was the TUC [Trades Union Congress] leaders that called off the general strike."

George, a Royal Mail worker in Glasgow, Scotland and member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, said, "What Trump has done against Venezuela is gangsterism and theft, committing war crimes against another country, bombing fishing boats, seizing oil tankers, kidnapping the head of state and his wife, bombing the capital to get the US oil companies back in to steal the resources.

"It won't stop there. He bombed Nigeria just before this and he wants their resources. It's capitalism, blatant colonialism to condemn people to poverty so they cannot

have the resources. Bypass the law and Congress, go straight to war crimes!

"Look at the profits of the arms firms like BAE Systems in the UK with record share prices."

George opposed the Starmer government committing troops to Ukraine and the dangers of war with Russia: "The war was provoked by NATO expanding eastwards since the end of the Soviet Union, including the Maidan coup in 2014 in Ukraine to put that 'chocolate' billionaire [Petro Poroshenko] in as a puppet government and now taking all the riches from Ukraine.

"NATO has used the Ukrainians as cannon fodder. I help families, refugees from Ukraine and they tell me life expectancy is just a month on the frontline. Trench warfare and people being blown to bits with drones. They are asking 'What is this for?', they are just told to go out and fight.

"If it was my son, I would not want him fighting. The regime in Ukraine arrested the socialist Bogdan Syrotyuk, he faces trumped-up charges of treason because he is fighting for the unity of the working class in Ukraine and Russia against Zelensky and Putin. They fear the truth and the message of working-class unity.

"The media is quick to hail pro-democracy protests in Iran. They are being attacked, but Starmer is locking up people here for peaceful protests over the genocide in Gaza. You are labelled 'terrorist' for opposing war crimes and the Labour government is prepared to see the pro-Palestinian activists starve for demanding their rights, held in prison without even being convicted of anything.

"These wars and the destruction of democracy can only be stopped by a popular movement of the working class from the bottom up. In Venezuela, US and around the world, uniting the working class. Capitalism has an appetite for destruction to increase power and wealth. It won't stop until it is stopped, and the working class has the power to do this."



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