Massive drone attack on Moscow marks new stage of US-NATO war with Russia

WSWS Editorial Board
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Ukraine attacked Moscow overnight Saturday in the largest strikes on the Russian capital in the war thus far. Moscow's mayor said 450 drones headed for the city were shot down. Three people were killed in the Moscow region, and the refinery that normally supplies 40 percent of the city's fuel was set on fire.

The attack followed Russia's drone attack one week earlier on a passenger train at Yahodyn station in western Ukraine, about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from Poland, minutes after a train carrying former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and security advisers of several European governments had passed through.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday that the attack had also included Ukraine's Flamingo cruise missile and the Pelican, the country's first domestically built ballistic missile. The Flamingo carries a 1,150-kilogram warhead, against 50 to 60 kilograms for the Liutyi drones Ukraine has relied on, and uses a guidance system provided by the French company Safran.

A de facto state of war now exists between Russia and the NATO imperialist powers, whose policy is relentless escalation.

Ukraine is attacking Russian cities with weapons paid for, jointly developed and often directly supplied by the NATO powers, which are also providing satellite imagery and targeting intelligence. Since June the European Union has put 8.5 billion euros into drones and missiles for Ukraine.

The financing and arming of attacks on Moscow go beyond recklessness. The European leaders know that a major Russian counterattack can follow, and their actions are intended to provoke just such retaliation. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told his parliament on Thursday that intelligence on Russian plans for drone and missile strikes on countries supporting Ukraine is now "highly consistent and, unfortunately, convincing." Two days later came the attack on Moscow.

Yet there are no calls by the leaders of any of the European NATO powers for negotiations, for a stepping back from the brink. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on September 2 of Europe's pressure on Russia: "We will increase it. And we will not stop."

The NATO powers calculate that by escalating the war they can bring about the collapse of the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin. They may believe that it will not come to a nuclear exchange. But they are willing to risk one, and there is a logic to events that is independent of what any government intends.

What drives the imperialist powers to such actions? The answer lies in the social, economic and political crises of their own rule, for which they have no solution. The criminal intentions of those who carry out these policies are real enough. But they are themselves the product of the objective logic of imperialism.

The European powers face slow growth, lagging productivity and a widening technology gap with the United States and China, which Mario Draghi, the former president of the European Central Bank, has called "an existential challenge." German imperialism plays the central role in the escalation. Berlin is the largest European financier of the war, and Chancellor Friedrich Merz has declared that there will be "no restrictions" on the range of the weapons used against Russia. Germany will raise its defense budget 32.7 percent next year, to €109.7 billion, while cutting €38.3 billion from healthcare and pensions by 2030.

Twice in the 20th century German imperialism marched east. In 1941, Hitler launched a war of annihilation against the Soviet Union for what he called *Lebensraum*, "living space," the conquest of the land, resources and labor of the east, which cost 27 million Soviet lives. Eight decades after the defeat of the Third Reich, the German ruling class, confronting the erosion of its industrial base and export markets, again sees a way out of its crisis in the east.

The United States, for its part, is driven by a massive and unsustainable federal debt and a deepening crisis of the dollar system accelerated by the surge in borrowing costs. Interest on the $40 trillion debt cost $1.052 trillion in the first 11 months of the fiscal year, more than the Pentagon spent. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note closed Friday

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at 5.01 percent, its highest since July 2007. American imperialism is seeking to offset its economic decline by military means.

The escalation by the European powers is in part a response to the shift in American foreign policy under Trump. The administration's attention is fixed, at least for now, on the war against Iran, which began on February 28, and on the conflict with China, whose president, Xi Jinping, arrives in Washington this week.

At the same time, dominant sections of the American ruling establishment are egging the Europeans on. Fifty-eight House Democrats voted on September 16 for a bill authorizing tariffs of up to 100 percent on the biggest buyers of Russian oil, and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, who voted "no," objected that it was too weak. If the Democrats win control of Congress on November 3, they will pursue a still more aggressive program of war against Russia.

The US and European imperialist powers have arrived at a position analogous to that of the great powers in 1914. In the weeks after the assassination of the Austrian archduke at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, the governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, France and Britain concluded that war, with all its terrible consequences, was the least bad option before them. As in 1914, and as with Hitler in 1939, the ruling classes see war as a means of suppressing problems that they cannot solve. None of these governments is prepared to retreat, and there is no red line they are not willing to cross.

The governments have chosen escalation, but they do not control its consequences. If they could be shown what their cities will look like in two years, it would not stop them. Leon Trotsky, the co-leader of the Russian Revolution, wrote in the 1938 founding program of the Fourth International: "The bourgeoisie, of course, is aware of the mortal danger to its domination represented by a new war. But that class is now immeasurably less capable of averting war than on the eve of 1914." This assessment is even more true today.

The war, now in its fifth year, was instigated by the NATO powers. Three decades of NATO expansion to Russia's borders and the arming of Ukraine as a NATO proxy were aimed at provoking the conflict that began with Putin's invasion in February 2022.

The Ukrainian regime, which is waging the war on behalf of the imperialist powers, faces perhaps the deepest crisis of all. The Zelensky dictatorship rules by martial law, holds no elections and has banned opposition parties. It fills its army by seizing men on the streets, and it faces mounting resistance to forced conscription in Lviv, Ternopil, Lutsk and other cities.

On August 10, a Ukrainian court sentenced the socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, 27, to 15 years in prison for opposing the war and calling for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers against it.

The reactionary invasion of Ukraine was the response of a regime that is itself the product of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Russian government is a government of oligarchs who enriched themselves through the plunder of state property, and its policies have been bankrupt from the beginning. Putin's strategy in invading Ukraine was to pressure the NATO powers, which he constantly called his "Western partners," into an accommodation with Russia. Instead, they used the invasion as a pretext for a massive military escalation.

The greatest danger in the political situation is the chasm between the scale of the threat and the understanding of it among the population. Masses of people sense the danger, but they cannot believe that their governments would risk nuclear war. The governments are exploiting this incredulity. The media and political establishment are doing everything possible to prevent the population from knowing and understanding the dangers.

Workers and young people in every country must be warned that their governments are leading them into a war with Russia that can end in the use of nuclear weapons, and that no section of the political establishment will stop it.

Nothing can stop this war except a movement of the international working class. The basis for such a movement exists. There is mounting opposition in the working class in every country, expressed in a growing wave of strikes and protests. The impact of the war, including soaring prices and the gutting of social programs to pay for rearmament, combines with the general social crisis: staggering levels of inequality, mass layoffs and the assault on democratic rights.

These struggles must be united in a conscious political movement. It must be international, uniting workers in Ukraine, Russia, Europe and America against their common enemy. It must be independent of all the parties of the ruling class, which support the war. It must be socialist, directed against the capitalist system that is the source of war.

The alternative to world war is world socialist revolution.

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