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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

WSWS Editorial Board

15.09.2024

The US and Russia on the verge of open war



A Yars intercontinental ballistic missile is test-fired as part of Russia's nuclear drills from a launch site in Plesetsk, northwestern Russia on Oct. 26, 2022. [AP Photo/Russian Defense Ministry Press Service]

The United States and Russia are on the verge of open warfare. This is the significance of the reports that the US and UK will soon allow Ukraine to use NATO missiles to strike Russian territory.

On Friday, US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer met to discuss the plans. The *New York Times*, reporting on the meeting, referred to the “deliberations” about a decision that “could be far more consequential than previous concessions by [Biden] that delivered largely defensive weapons to Ukraine during the past two and a half years.”

In fact, the meeting with Starmer and Biden can only be read as a final signing off on a decision that has already been made. Referring to remarks by Starmer after the meeting, the *Times* article stated that Starmer “hinted that he expected a decision about the missiles to come soon.”

The *Guardian* reported Wednesday that “a decision had already been made to allow Ukraine to use Storm Shadow cruise missiles on targets inside Russia.”

Starmer flew to Washington less than two weeks before he was scheduled to attend the United Nations General Assembly on September 24. Clearly, it was decided that that Labour Party prime minister had to have emergency discussions with the Democratic Party president to finalize the plans.

The meeting between Biden and Starmer took place just one day after Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that the use of NATO weapons to attack Russian cities would make NATO a party to the war, raising the threat of Russian retaliation against NATO members.

Responding to the planned announcement, Putin declared, “If this decision is made, it will mean nothing less than the direct participation of NATO countries, the US and European countries, in the conflict in Ukraine.” He added, “Their direct participation, of course, significantly changes the very essence, the very nature of the conflict.”

A vast escalation of the war, with all its catastrophic consequences, is being implemented entirely behind the backs of the population. After his meeting with Starmer, Biden was directly asked by a reporter, “What do you say to Vladimir Putin’s threat of war?” With staggering arrogance, Biden barked, “Be quiet.” These words were directed to the press, but it was a threat to the entire population: Don’t question us.

Asked the same question again, Biden replied, “I don’t think much about Vladimir Putin,” before White House staff loudly ushered the press out of the room.

The US and UK are preparing to take a decision that threatens to lead to a full-scale war between nuclear-armed states. Even if it does not start with nuclear weapons, the consequences are enormous.

Whatever the timing of the announcement that NATO weapons will be used to strike deep inside of Russia, the undeniable reality is that the United States and Russia are on the verge of open warfare.

A relentless military logic is at work. The NATO powers are responding to a situation in which their Ukrainian proxy force has been exhausted and is facing a military debacle. Only through greater and more direct intervention by NATO can the entire project of the war be salvaged.

The Biden administration, however, is attempting to downplay the vast dangers posed by their reckless escalation of the war by claiming that Putin is bluffing and would not respond to NATO attacks on Russian cities.

Asked to respond to Putin's statements, the State Department said Friday:

That's very similar to things that he has said over the course of the past two and a half years, we've seen him make similar statements... So it's not really a new statement by President Putin.

This assertion echoed the declaration in a letter by Republican lawmakers encouraging strikes on Russian cities with NATO weapons, which declared:

Neither Ukraine's use of US-provided weapons in Russia nor its military incursion into Russia's Kursk region – the first foreign occupation of Russian territory since World War II – has triggered a Russian escalatory response.

The claim that because Putin has not retaliated to US provocations in the past he would not do so again is false and, frankly, insane. What if this assumption is wrong?

The strategy of the reactionary "Special Military Operation" pursued by the Russian ruling class, that a limited military action against Ukraine would result in a negotiated settlement with NATO and its Kyiv proxies, has collapsed.

Now, Putin is himself under enormous pressure to respond to NATO's escalation, and he has run out of room to retreat. A high level adviser to Putin, in a widely read interview, has stated that nuclear weapons were created to defend Russia and the government must be willing to use them.

For its part, facing a collapse of Ukraine's military position, the Biden administration is seeking to ensure that, no matter the outcome of the US presidential election, less than two months away, the "facts on the ground" will compel a major escalation of war.

The conditions are being created for a massive escalatory spiral of war between NATO and Russia, with incalculable consequences.

This month, Mehring Books published *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War*, consisting of speeches given by WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North to the online May Day rallies organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International that began in 2014. In his remarks to the first May Day rally, North warned:

Those who believe that war with China and Russia is an impossibility – that the major imperialist powers would not risk war with nuclear powers – are deluding themselves. The history of the 20th century, with its two devastating world wars and its innumerable and very bloody localized conflicts, has provided sufficient evidence of the risks the imperialist ruling

classes are prepared to take. Indeed, they are prepared to risk the fate of all humanity and the planet itself. One hundred years after the outbreak of World War I and 75 years after the start of World War II, the struggle against the danger of a third imperialist cataclysm confronts the international working class.

Every warning made by the ICFI and WSWS about the threat of global war has been confirmed. Without an intervention by the working class and the development of mass anti-war protests, nothing can stop the march towards war.

The same contradictions that give rise to imperialist war create the objective basis for social revolution. In this sense, the strike by over 30,000 workers at Boeing, which has crippled not only a major provider of passenger aircraft but a significant US military defense contractor, is of immense significance. Whatever the immediate contractual issues, it expresses the growing opposition of the working class to the deepening crisis of capitalism of which the war itself is an expression.

This opposition must be developed not just along trade union lines, but along political lines. The movement by the workers at Boeing must become a rallying point for class action against the military pyromaniacs, and the struggle by the working class to defend its social and economic rights must be fused with the struggle against war, based on a socialist perspective.