

Finnish government invokes Nazi-collaborationist traditions as it backs Trump, builds up military

David Brown
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In recent weeks, Finland's right-wing government has announced measures supporting NATO and the Trump administration's expansionist agenda. It plans to leave the Ottawa Treaty banning the use of landmines, to sell the United States icebreaker ships to militarise the Arctic, and raise the military budget by billions of euros. Amid US trade war measures against the world, threats to annex Canada and Greenland, the ongoing US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, and violent attacks on democratic rights in the US, it is acting as an enabler of Donald Trump.

On March 29, Finnish president Alexander Stubb of the conservative National Coalition Party (NCP) paid an unofficial visit to Trump at his Mar-a-Lago resort. Over seven hours of dining and golf, the two discussed the NATO war in Ukraine, expanding European militarism, and according to Finnish public broadcaster YLE, Finland's historical alliance with Nazi Germany during the invasion of the Soviet Union. Stubb bragged, "President Trump independently raised the icebreaker idea several times during the day, and that is a good thing for Finland."

Icebreakers are essential for US plans to militarily dominate the Arctic region, where reduced sea ice from global warming is opening up new sea lanes and additional natural resources. Just two days before Stubb's visit with Trump, US vice president JD Vance travelled to Greenland, held by NATO ally Denmark, and called to annex it, declaring: "What is the alternative? To give up the North Atlantic, to give up the Arctic to China, to Russia, and other regimes that don't have the best interest of the American people at heart? We have no other option."

Stubb told other European powers that another main topic of discussion was the NATO war in Ukraine. He pushed Trump to not trust Putin, and to negotiate a ceasefire by Easter that would allow Ukrainian membership in NATO and the deployment of US-backed European peacekeepers along with threats of additional sanctions. Finland, along with other Baltic and Nordic countries, has been one of the strongest proponents of the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

The day after Stubb's visit with Trump, the *New York Times*

published an article admitting to the direct participation of the US military in preparing and conducting Ukrainian military operations against Russia. Under Biden, the US government sought to provoke the Russian invasion and use Ukrainians to grind down the Russian military to score a strategic victory for US imperialism.

Trump has criticized pouring vast sums of money into Ukraine's desperate military position and demanded predatory mineral deals from the Zelensky regime to "pay" for past and future support. In response to US efforts to turn Ukraine into a de facto colony and reach a bilateral accommodation with Putin, the European imperialist powers have launched massive rearmament programmes, aiming to continue the war on Russia without US support.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told Germany's Tagesschau news program: "It cannot be that Russia gets the Ukrainian territories, the US gets the natural resources and Europe foots the bill for peacekeeping. That doesn't work. We have to mobilise our strength now."

Finland and Sweden used the war as a pretext to drop their longstanding neutrality and join NATO in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Since the 2023 parliamentary elections, Finland has been governed by a right-wing coalition led by Stubb's NCP and including the far-right Finns Party, the Swedish People's Party, which advocates on behalf of the Swedish-speaking minority, and the Christian Democrats. In neighbouring Sweden, a similar governing coalition relies on the fascistic Sweden Democrats for a parliamentary majority.

The considerable influence enjoyed by far-right parties in both countries speaks to the political forces driving their role as frontline states in the imperialist drive to plunder Russia.

In justifying their support for Trump, the Finnish government has repeatedly spoken positively of Finland's alliance with the Nazis during World War II. A key theme of Stubb's remarks in Kiev on the third anniversary of Russia's US-provoked invasion of Ukraine was that it was a tragedy that Finland, and by implication its ally, Nazi Germany, lost to the Soviet Union. He stated, "Now, in World War II, Finland had to accept a peace with Stalin."

These sentiments were echoed by foreign minister Elina Valtonen (NCP) last month in a London speech, where she stated, “We Finns know Russia. Russia shares a land border with 14 countries. Only one of them has constantly remained an independent democracy through the second world war and the cold war: Finland.”

In reality, Finland maintained its “independence” during WWII by facilitating the Holocaust and active participation in the Nazi War of Extermination against the Soviet Union. Under the slogan of defending their independence from the Soviet Union, the Finnish government participated in countless historic crimes, including organising a Waffen-SS battalion that carried out war crimes as part of the Nazi invasion of Soviet Ukraine.

The Finnish government received advanced notice of Hitler’s Operation Barbarossa, the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union that claimed at least 27 million Soviet citizens’ lives. With Nazi support, Finland invaded Soviet territory, first to reconquer land Helsinki had been forced to concede during the Winter War of 1939-40, and then to join in Hitler’s 28-month blockade of Leningrad, which killed over 1 million people. In 1944, with Nazi Germany’s ultimate defeat all but assured, Finland concluded a separate peace agreement with the Soviet Union.

The social welfare state that Finland is known for worldwide was built up under the influence of the Soviet Union and the strong support among Finnish workers for the Communist Party. Notwithstanding the betrayals of Stalinism, the considerable support among the Finnish working class for communism reflected the continued impact of the heroic struggle waged by “Red Finland” during the Finnish Revolution and subsequent Civil War of 1918—a movement bloodily suppressed by the Finnish bourgeoisie with the support of German imperialism.

After the dissolution of the USSR, the Finnish capitalist state, which was founded over the mass graves of socialist workers killed during and after the Civil War, is seeking to dismantle every gain of the working class and return to its role as a servant of the major imperialist powers.

Amid the current anti-Russian agitation, the government has enacted emergency anti-refugee measures, closing the border with Russia. Embracing the far-right propaganda of the Finns Party, it claimed that the attempt of a mere 1,300 Middle Eastern asylum seekers to cross into Finland from Russia was a national emergency. Violating the basic democratic right of asylum, it has applied for an extension of its emergency border closure into 2026, scapegoating immigrants to divert popular anger from its programme of austerity and war.

The Finnish government reacted to the US-provoked war on Russia in Ukraine by raising military spending, presenting itself as an essential partner in future wars against Russia and China. Stubb consistently presents support for the Ukrainian regime as essential for the strategic goal of confronting China. Visiting

Kiev on the third anniversary of the war, Stubb stated: “You cannot make a deal with Putin, because that basically means a deal also with China.”

On April 1, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo (NCP) said Finland would raise military spending by a further €3 billion, and join Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia in withdrawing from the Ottawa convention, which prohibits the use of antipersonnel landmines. Landmines indiscriminately kill and maim civilians long after conflicts officially end. Orpo justified the move by citing the military threat from Russia.

The right-wing Finnish government is on pace for military spending to triple by the end of the decade. In 2020, the Finnish defence budget amounted to €3.2 billion, a considerable sum for a country of just over 5 million people. It currently stands at €6.2 billion, and the recently announced increase will see it rise to €9 billion by 2029, or 3 percent of gross domestic product. In December 2021, Helsinki ordered 64 US-built F-35 fighter jets at a cost of \$9.4 billion, the country’s largest ever single military purchase.

Demonstrating the farcical character of the government’s claim to be arming in defence of democracy and human rights, Finland has agreed to purchase €312 million of military equipment from Israel, while that country carries out the genocide of Palestinians.

To pay for this, the government is enacting deeply unpopular cuts to social spending. A January poll showed that 54 percent of Finns disapproved of the spending cuts. Orpo’s government has committed to a €9 billion fiscal adjustment agenda, including spending cuts and adjustments to value added tax. Much of the savings flow straight into the defence budget.

The Finnish working class has begun to move in opposition to these broad attacks on education, healthcare and other social spending with several significant strikes. In January, 300,000 workers went on a three-day strike in opposition to government cuts and efforts to tie pay to exports. Since then, there have been a series of short strikes among airline workers, public employees, tech workers, and most recently meat packers.

The strikes have so far been limited by the trade unions, which have confined their demands to small shifts in pay or new negotiations with the right-wing government. Finnish workers’ conditions therefore continue to decline, amid rising unemployment. These conditions cannot be defended against the world economic crisis through cynical manoeuvring as a junior partner to Trump’s fascist policies. The fight for good wages and jobs can only be carried out in alliance with workers internationally as part of the fight against imperialist war and for socialism.



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