

German Chancellor Scholz's first US visit: War summit in Washington

Peter Schwarz
7 February 2022

In his inaugural US visit as German chancellor, Social Democratic Party leader Olaf Scholz will meet with President Joe Biden Monday in Washington. In the days leading up to the meeting, the pressure on the German government to unreservedly support the US war drive against Russia has been sharply intensified.

The US and its closest NATO allies have been trying for weeks to either provoke a Russian military move against Ukraine or stage a fake one so as to create the pretext for a war that could turn the world into a nuclear inferno. They are arming the nationalist forces in Ukraine with lethal weapons and deploying thousands of additional NATO soldiers to Eastern Europe.

"If the chancellor wants to maintain Germany's key role in Europe, he must send a clear message during his visit to the US—this includes a commitment to military deterrence," Thorsten Brenner, founder of the private think tank Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI), told *Der Spiegel*. Well-connected and leading transatlantic journalists who write for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Zeit* issued similar calls. (See: Warmongering against Russia in the name of Auschwitz).

Pressure on the German government is also being stepped up from the US side. The *New York Times* headlined a piece: "Germany Falters on Ukraine, and Allies Worry." The *Wall Street Journal* asked, "Is Germany a reliable American ally?" and answered in big letters with a German "Nein."

In Congress, Democrats and Republicans are working on a comprehensive package of sanctions, including against the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which could possibly go into effect even if Russia does not launch a military attack on Ukraine.

"Germany's reputation has suffered greatly in recent months," explained Thorsten Brenner in *Der Spiegel*. He continued: "Last week, Emily Haber, the German

ambassador in Washington, sent an incendiary letter to Berlin. Germany is seen as an 'unreliable partner' on Russia and China policy. Germany is threatened with massive reputational damage. Republicans regularly say that Germany is 'in bed with Putin.'" The meeting with President Biden "offers Scholz the stage to correct this impression."

Brenner's Berlin-based think tank GPPI is politically close to the US government. Its Advisory Board includes Ann-Marie Slaughter, who was former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's director of policy planning, and US investor George Soros. Brenner emphasized that the meeting between Scholz and Biden is "about much more than Ukraine." It will include the further buildup of NATO in Eastern Europe and solidarity with the US against China.

"More importantly," Brenner writes, "Scholz should send a clear signal that Germany will make additional military investments in deterring the Kremlin and defending NATO allies on the eastern flank."

He adds that Scholz should at the same time "make concrete proposals in Washington" for transatlantic cooperation on China policy. He should "seek solidarity with Washington against coercive economic measures by Beijing," and "make it clear that German peace policy is helping to defend the status quo in the Taiwan Straits."

Scholz and his foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, have long since made it clear that the German government is on the side of the US and NATO in the conflict with Russia. They have stated time and time again that "there would be a great cost to Russia if there were military aggression against Ukraine."

After initial hesitation, Scholz also made it clear that Nord Stream 2 would be part of possible sanctions on Russia. Sources from the Chancellery report that Germany and the US have long been working together closely on planning financial and economic sanctions.

On Sunday, when he was already on his way to Washington, Scholz assured public broadcaster ARD's *Report from Berlin* television show: "We have had a clear strategy together with our allies for a long time." He added that it will also be made clear "that military aggression against Ukraine would have high costs for Russia." He noted that there are very precise agreements on this "with the US, the EU and everyone who is concerned."

Scholz said the second part of the strategy is getting people talking again. In addition to the talks between the US and Russia, the NATO-Russia Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), he highlighted the Normandy diplomatic format, in which Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany are negotiating without the US.

As far as the military deployment against Russia is concerned, Berlin is fully on Washington's side. Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht (Social Democratic Party-SPD) announced on Sunday that more German army soldiers would be sent to Lithuania, where Germany has been the leading nation in the NATO operation for five years and provides half of the 1,200 men and women in a multinational unit. The German federal government has also decided to send Eurofighter jets to Romania for air surveillance.

Within the ranks of the governing "Traffic Light Coalition," made up of the Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats (FDP), not a critical word can be heard about NATO's war course, which threatens to unleash a third world war.

If there are still tensions between Berlin and Washington, this is mainly for economic and geostrategic reasons. The German government fears that Germany, whose energy supply depends on cheap Russian gas imports, will have to bear the brunt of the sanctions against Russia and will be weakened economically, including in relation to the US. Berlin also fears becoming geopolitically completely dependent on American military power.

There are strong forces in the German bourgeoisie that want an alliance with Russia either against China or as a counterweight to the US. Ex-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who is a friend of Vladimir Putin, heads the Nord Stream supervisory board and has now announced that he will also join the supervisory board of the Russian gas company Gazprom. He is politically isolated, but he has support in business circles.

Another reason why the government is holding back is

massive popular opposition to war. The last thing the SPD, Greens and FDP want is an anti-war movement like the one that developed in 2003 against the Iraq war. All polls show that the war drive is rejected by an overwhelming majority.

According to a Forsa poll, 53 percent fear war, but only 20 percent feel threatened by Russia. Ninety-four percent believe that good relations with Russia are important. According to ARD Deutschlandtrend, 71 percent oppose arms deliveries to Ukraine. Only 20 percent are in favour.

The media have reacted to these poll numbers with a hysterical campaign. *Bild*, the gutter tabloid from Springer, has played an especially prominent role. Its lies are reminiscent of Hitler's minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels.

Bild claimed in an article published Saturday, headlined "Explosive Details of Planned Russian Invasion of Ukraine," that "The Russian attack on Ukraine has not even started yet, but the secret services already have information about the period after the great war and the cruel puppet regime that the Kremlin wants to establish in Ukraine."

The plans that *Bild* dreamed up range from the military siege and takeover of Ukraine's cities by infiltrated Russian agents, to the convening of a mock parliament, to the setting up of internment camps to break the "resistance of millions," to the forced annexation of Ukraine to Russia.

Evidence? *Bild* provides none.

A "foreign secret service" has collected "details about Russian post-war plans," the newspaper asserts. "A secret report was created from the intelligence gained. *Bild* is familiar with it."

At least since the Iraq war, it is well known what such anonymous secret service reports about weapons of mass destruction and alleged atrocities are worth. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova commented that "they have crossed all possible lines of human, genuine morality and ethics."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact