

In war speech, German Chancellor Scholz triples defense budget to rearm against Russia

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The Socialist Equality Party (Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, SGP) and the *World Socialist Web Site* condemn the war offensive announced yesterday by Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrats, SPD) in the German parliament (Bundestag) and supported by all the Bundestag parties.

In a speech reminiscent of the darkest hours of German history, Scholz threatened Russia and announced arms deliveries to Ukraine and a massive increase in German troops in Eastern Europe. The speech culminated in the announcement of the largest rearmament programme since the end of the Second World War.

The entire parliamentary debate left no doubt that the ruling class, despite its crimes in two world wars, is back on the warpath. Germany's ruling elite sees Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine as an opportunity to put long cherished and long prepared militarization plans into practice.

"Better equipment, modern equipment, more personnel—that costs a lot of money," said Scholz. "For this purpose, the federal government will set up a German army special fund" and provide it with "a one-off amount of 100 billion euros in the 2022 budget year. We will use the funds for necessary investments and armaments projects."

Some of the rearmament programme's key goals include the "next generation of combat aircraft and tanks," the "Eurodrone" and "the acquisition of the armed Heron drone. ... A modern replacement for outdated Tornado jets will also be procured in good time" for Germany's current "nuclear sharing" of US nuclear weapons aimed at Russia. He continued, "The Eurofighter is to be enabled for electronic warfare. The F-35 fighter aircraft will be considered as a transport plane," he continued.

Germany needs "planes that fly, ships that set sail and soldiers that are optimally equipped for their missions," he enthused. "This is the key issue. And it is certainly achievable for a country of our size and importance in Europe." But one should not fool oneself, he went on. "Better equipment, modern equipment, more personnel—that costs a lot of money," he said.

In addition to the German army "special fund," the government is planning a massive increase in military spending. "From now on, we will invest more than 2 percent of gross domestic product in our defense every year," announced

Scholz. "And I address myself here to all parliamentary groups in the German Bundestag: Let's write the special fund into the German Constitution," the Basic Law.

The figures mentioned by Scholz are gigantic. Raising German defense spending to 2 percent of its GDP entails an increase of €24 billion to over €71 billion. This is more than double the health care budget (€35.3 billion in 2021). The additional €100 billion of the "special fund" is five times the entire education and research budget (€20.8 billion in 2021). Together with the €50 billion budgeted so far, it amounts to a tripling of the military budget this year.

It is clear who will bear the cost of this madness and what purpose it serves. Further cuts are being made in education and social services, and there is not even enough money for health care and care sectors in the midst of a deadly pandemic. Nonetheless, a massive increase in the defense budget is to be anchored in the Basic Law in order to permanently finance the gigantic armament projects and prepare for war against Russia and other countries.

Scholz described it as a "mission to act" to dissuade Putin "from his war course." The war was "a catastrophe for Ukraine. But the war will also prove to be a catastrophe for Russia," he threatened. Elsewhere, he asked, "What capabilities does Putin's Russia have, and what capabilities do we need to face this threat, today and in the future?"

He announced to applause that the federal government had decided on Saturday "that Germany will supply Ukraine with weapons to defend the country." In addition, the German army has "already expanded its support for the eastern alliance partners" and will "continue to do so." Scholz gave an overview of Germany's contribution to the NATO buildup against Russia, which is increasingly taking the form of direct preparations for war.

"In Lithuania, where we lead the NATO task force, we have increased our troops," Scholz said. "We have extended and expanded our air policing assignment in Romania. We want to participate in building a new NATO unit in Slovakia. Our navy is helping with additional ships to secure the North and Baltic Seas and the Mediterranean. And we are ready to take part in defending the airspace of our allies in Eastern Europe with anti-aircraft missiles."

From the mouth of a German chancellor, such threats of war against Russia are doubly criminal. During World War II, Germany invaded the Soviet Union and waged a war of extermination in which 27 million Soviet citizens lost their lives and 6 million Jews were industrially murdered.

Apparently, these crimes are not enough for Germany's ruling class. Eighty years later, it is ready, if necessary, to sacrifice all of humanity in a third world war.

"No ifs and buts, we stand by our duty of assistance in NATO," said Scholz. "President Putin should not underestimate our determination to work with our allies to defend every square meter of Alliance territory." We mean "that very seriously. With the admission of a country to NATO, our will as an ally is bound to defend that country as we would ourselves."

Scholz's affirmation of the "duty to assist" has potentially devastating consequences. Article 5 of the NATO treaty states that "an armed attack against one or more 'parties' will be regarded as an attack against all" and commits the alliance "to provide assistance ... including the use of armed force."

If the Ukraine war spreads to an Eastern European NATO country, Scholz is undertaking to go to war together with the entire NATO alliance against Russia, a nuclear armed power.

Scholz's claim that German rearmament was merely a reaction to Putin, who overnight brought war back to Europe in order to shatter the "European security order," is a propaganda lie. So is the claim that the West is concerned with defending "freedom and democracy."

In fact, the NATO powers have waged war for imperialist interests almost continuously for 30 years and reducing entire countries to rubble in the process, including in Europe itself. In 1999, the US-led NATO coalition led by Washington, which Germany joined, bombed Serbia for 78 days to impose Kosovo's secession on it.

In recent years, the ruling class has continually pushed for the return of German militarism. In 2013, leading journalists, academics, military personnel, business officials and representatives of all the parliamentary parties drew up and published the SWP (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik) paper "New Power, New Responsibility," which announced Germany's return to an aggressive foreign policy in order to militarily assert its global interests as a "trading and export nation."

At the Munich Security Conference in 2014, the plans were officially announced by then-Federal President Joachim Gauck and his successor, former Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD). Significantly, Gauck sat on the Bundestag tribune during Scholz's speech and demonstratively hugged the Ukrainian ambassador.

Just days after the 2014 conference, Berlin and Washington, in close cooperation with fascist forces, orchestrated a coup in Kiev to bring an anti-Russian regime to power. Since then, NATO has continued to escalate its military deployments in

Eastern Europe and effectively provoked Putin's attack on Ukraine.

The intervention is now being used by the entire ruling class to close ranks around an extreme pro-war campaign.

"I don't know any parties anymore, I only know Germans," Kaiser Wilhelm II rejoiced when Germany entered World War I in 1914, and all parties in the Reichstag voted for war credits.

The war fever with which all parliamentary groups paid tribute to the chancellor yesterday is reminiscent of this. As Scholz spoke, representatives of the coalition government's parliamentary groups and the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) opposition repeatedly rose from their seats together. Representatives of the Left Party and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) also applauded and spoke to express their full support for NATO aggression against Russia.

"Putin is the aggressor here and must be stopped immediately. His great power fantasies must not become reality," demanded the parliamentary group leader of the Left Party, Amira Mohamed Ali.

CDU Chairman Friedrich Merz praised Scholz for "a good government declaration" and assured him of his support, especially to impose rearmament against deep popular opposition. "If you want a comprehensive upgrading of our armed forces—and we want it from today obviously with you—then we will go down this path with you, even against resistance," Merz said.

The Socialist Equality Party is the only party opposing the war hysteria. We fight to build an anti-war movement of the international working class that aims to eliminate the cause of war—the capitalist profit system—and build a global socialist society. The aggressive stance of the German ruling class and the growing threat of a devastating third world war give this struggle enormous urgency.



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