

Open letter to German Chancellor Scholz expresses mounting opposition to threat of Third World War

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Although Germany's entire political and media establishment has been in war mode for months, opposition to the proxy war in Ukraine is growing. An open letter warning of the danger of a "Third World War" and rejecting the delivery of "heavy weapons" to Ukraine has received more than 200,000 signatures within a few days.

The letter calls on Chancellor Olaf Scholz, with a view to the future "judgment of history" and the "historical responsibility" of Germany, "not to deliver any further heavy weapons to Ukraine, either directly or indirectly," as this would "accept an escalation of this war into a nuclear conflict." "A Russian counterattack," the authors say, "could then trigger the NATO treaty assistance case and thus the imminent danger of a world war."

The first signatories included the filmmakers Andreas Dresen and Alexander Kluge, the journalist Alice Schwarzer and the criminal law professor Reinhard Merkel. The letter was published on Friday, April 29, a day after the German parliament approved by a large majority the delivery of anti-aircraft tanks to the Ukrainian military, which is riddled with right-wing extremists.

The broad support for the open letter is an expression of the enormous opposition to war, which is deeply rooted in the German working class after two world wars. The more openly the German government embraces imperial and Nazi great power policies—war against Russia and military dominance over Eastern Europe—the stronger the resistance grows.

This was clearly demonstrated on May 1. Berlin Mayor Franziska Giffey was booed at a DGB (German trade union confederation) rally in front of the

Brandenburg Gate and had eggs thrown at her when she demanded "respect" for the police and "support" for the war in Ukraine. In the course of his militaristic speech in Düsseldorf, Chancellor Scholz was forced to shout at demonstrators who described him as a "warmonger" and criticised his militarist policy.

Opinion polls also prove the growing anti-war sentiment. According to a recent Deutschlandtrend survey, support for the delivery of "heavy weapons" to the Ukrainian military fell by 10 percentage points to 45 percent within a month. In a further survey by the opinion research institute Insa, 73 percent of the respondents expressed the "concern that the Ukraine war could expand into a Third World War."

But how can the Third World War be averted? The "Letter of the 28" does not provide an answer to this. It addresses a powerless and hopeless appeal to Chancellor Scholz, who has proved himself to be the leading militarist among all the heads of state and governments of the European Union since the beginning of the war. Scholz and the traffic light coalition have provided the German army with a "special fund" of more than €100 billion, thus initiating the largest German rearmament since the fall of the Nazi regime.

Moreover, Scholz runs a government that supplies more weapons and ammunition to Ukraine than any other EU country. In addition to the secret arms deliveries that have taken place since the beginning of the war, which Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht (Social Democrats) has publicly admitted, tanks have also been smuggled into Ukraine via Eastern Europe for weeks. As the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper reported earlier this week, Ukraine now has more functional tanks than

Russia, according to insiders from the US Department of Defense.

Scholz has not conducted a prudent policy that carefully considered the risks, as the authors of the letter claim. On the contrary, the German government has deliberately provoked and brought about the conflict. Already in 2014, the German government announced the end of “military restraint” and orchestrated the anti-Russian “Maidan” coup d'état in Kiev just a few days later—together with Washington. Since then, the Ukrainian military has been waging a war against its own Russian-speaking minority population by resorting to fascist gangs of murderers such as the Azov Battalion.

The German government is de facto arming these fascist units and the right-wing extremist legionnaires who are fighting with them, and is using the war to impose itself as Europe's dominant military power.

The fact that it is pointless to appeal to the “sense” of this ruling class is shown by the angry smear campaign with which the political establishment and the media themselves have reacted to the tame demands of the open letter.

“Anyone who feels ‘harassed’ by a war should straighten out their moral compass with a hammer,” said Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (Free Democrats, FDP), chairman of the Defense Committee. Green politician Anton Hofreiter accused Schwarzer of spreading “pure Russian propaganda,” in a conversation with the right-wing *Bild* channel, as if the concern about a nuclear war is war propaganda.

In addition to Minister of Economic Affairs Robert Habeck (Greens), Britta Haddelmann, leader of the Greens' parliamentary group, spoke out vehemently against the letter. Alexander Lambsdorff (FDP) praised a *Spiegel* article by columnist Sascha Lobo, who described “German rag-tag pacifism” in the classical manner of a right-wing militarist as “the best thing that can happen for Putin.”

Those who are closely linked to German policy on Ukraine were particularly aggressive. Sergei Sumlenny, long-time head of the Green-aligned Heinrich Böll Foundation in Kiev, accused Schwarzer of having “regularly instrumentalized” her publication for the dissemination of Russian propaganda. Only days before, Sumlenny called for war against Russia and literally demanded “to eliminate the nuclear power of

Russia.” On Twitter, he said that “the Russians” were “much more involved in Putin's crimes than the Germans were in Hitler's crimes.”

An appeal to these people to pursue their war plans a little more carefully is like an appeal to the devil to make hell a little cooler. The aggressiveness of German imperialism has objective causes. Under conditions of the deepest capitalist crisis since the end of the Second World War—which was brought to a head by the COVID-19 pandemic—all imperialist powers resort to the means of war in order to divert class tensions outward.

The only way to prevent a Third World War is to mobilize the international working class. As David North, the editorial chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site*, noted at the International May Day Rally on Sunday:

The contradictions that threaten world war also create conditions for world socialist revolution. The challenge that confronts the working class is this: to strengthen and accelerate the objective tendencies that lead to revolution, while undermining and weakening those that lead to world war.

The basis for the struggle against war is the movement of the working class. That is the great social force that has the power to stop war, put an end to capitalism, tear down national borders and build a world socialist society.



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