

Scholz, Macron and Draghi in Kiev: European imperialism backs escalation of war against Russia

Peter Schwarz
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Anyone who believed that the leading European powers were adopting a more peaceful course vis-à-vis Russia than the United States was proven wrong on Thursday.

French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi traveled together on a special train to Kiev to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. In Kiev, Romanian President Klaus Johannis joined the party.

The message that the four of them conveyed was unequivocal. While the war with Russia is increasingly becoming a war of attrition without a foreseeable end, claiming hundreds of lives every day, they are doing everything they can to escalate and prolong it. They promised to supply Ukraine with more heavy weapons and to raise the prospect of accession to the European Union (EU). In doing so, they consciously accept the danger of a nuclear, third world war.

Chancellor Scholz stressed the symbolic significance of the joint visit as the leaders traveled to Kiev. “It is important that the heads of government of the three major countries now go to Kiev and show their support for Ukraine in this very special situation of war,” he said. The aim was not only to demonstrate solidarity, he said, but also to continue providing financial, humanitarian and military assistance “as long as is necessary for Ukraine's struggle for independence.”

At a joint press conference with Zelensky, Macron, Draghi and Johannis, Scholz then assured: “We also support Ukraine with the supply of weapons, and we will continue to do so as long as Ukraine needs our support.” Specifically, in addition to the anti-aircraft Cheetah tank, the tank howitzer 2000, the modern anti-

aircraft system Iris-T and the special radar Cobra, Scholz promised the delivery of multiple rocket launchers in consultation with Britain and the US.

Macron also promised to supply additional howitzers. “In addition to the twelve Caesars [self-propelled howitzers] that have already been delivered, six more are to be added in the coming weeks,” he said.

Zelensky was enthusiastic. Weapons would be delivered, including those desired by Ukraine, he said. “Germany is helping us a lot with this,” he added. He described the prospect of EU candidate status as a “historic choice for Europe.”

The day before, the defence ministers of the so-called Ukraine-Defense Contact Group, which includes 30 NATO members, as well as Sweden, Finland, Georgia, Moldova, Australia and a dozen other countries, decided at a meeting in Brussels on a massive increase in arms supplies.

Artillery pieces, multiple rocket launchers, combat drones, armored vehicles, anti-ship missiles and other weaponry will be supplied to Ukraine as quickly as possible. The US and its allies hope the additional weaponry will turn the course of the war in favour of Ukraine, with Russia currently controlling one-fifth of Ukrainian territory.

The lion's share will come from the US, which has increased its arms supplies by another \$1 billion. But the European powers are not simply following the US, as some critics claim. They are pursuing their own imperialist interests.

The massive rearmament of Ukraine, the deployment of ever-greater numbers of NATO troops on the Eastern European border with Russia and Ukraine's aspiration to join the EU are changing the character of the

European Union. It is evolving from its origins as an economic union more and more openly into an imperialist military alliance directed against Russia, China and ultimately against the US, as well as the European working class.

While the Ukrainian oligarchs and the country's right-wing and corrupt elites dream of a place at the banquet table in Brussels, EU membership would be a nightmare for Ukrainian workers. Even during the absorption process, which usually lasts for years or decades, the government must curtail all "superfluous" social expenditure.

Mario Draghi, who now advocates Ukraine's admission to the EU as Italy's head of government, was head of the European Central Bank from 2011, when it imposed an austerity program on the Greek working class as part of the so-called Troika, which plunged millions into bitter poverty and drove thousands to death.

In the Eastern European countries that have been members of the EU for more than 15 years, workers continue to toil for starvation wages for international corporations, while social infrastructure has been decimated and one corrupt regime follows another in power.

In the twentieth century, Germany tried twice to bring Ukraine under its influence. The first was in 1918 during the dictated peace of Brest-Litovsk, when it forced the revolutionary government in Moscow to abandon Ukraine and established a puppet regime, which was last led by the brutal tsarist officer and dictator Pavlo Skoropadskyi. Then, in 1941, in the war of extermination against the Soviet Union, it murdered millions in the territory of today's Ukraine to create "living space" for Germans.

Scholz's visit to the Kiev suburb of Irpin, where he lamented Russia's "unimaginable cruelty," was the height of hypocrisy. He could have disembarked on the way from the city centre at Babi Yar, where the German Wehrmacht murdered 34,000 Jews from Kiev within 36 hours on September 29 and 30, 1941. But this would not have suited the Kiev regime, which reveres Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera and his organization of Ukrainian nationalists as "heroes."

When the US and its allies destroyed entire cities, including Baghdad, Mosul, Fallujah, Tripoli, Belgrade and Gaza, no corresponding pilgrimages like the one

held Thursday took place. The morals of Scholz, Macron and Draghi are dictated exclusively by imperialist interests at home and abroad.

A decisive motive for the rearmament of Germany, which will triple its defence budget this year, and the whole of Europe is the intensification of the class struggle. The ruling classes of Europe and the US are responding to the growing rebellion against the deadly consequences of the pandemic and the effects of inflation by rearming against external and internal enemies. War and militarism have always served as a means of forcibly suppressing the class struggle.

President Macron, who is facing a wave of strikes and is in danger of losing his parliamentary majority on Sunday, announced at a military trade fair four days before his trip to Kiev that France and the EU were "living in a war economy in which we must become permanently organised."

German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht announced the formation of a new "Territorial Leadership Command," largely unnoticed by the public, which is responsible for the defence and logistics of NATO in Germany as well as for "Homeland Security." The domestic operations of the German armed forces (Bundeswehr), which are in fact forbidden, are thereby placed under the same command as the war offensive against Russia.

"With the new command, we can provide the necessary forces for a national crisis team very quickly, if necessary, in addition to the purely military tasks," Lambrecht explained. She cited the COVID-19 crisis unit in the Chancellery, which is headed by a Bundeswehr general, as a role model.

The danger of war and dictatorship can only be stopped by an independent movement of the working class. The growing strike movement of the working class and the opposition to war must be united into a conscious international movement against its cause, capitalism. This is what the International Committee of the Fourth International and its sections, the Socialist Equality Parties, are fighting for.



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