

European powers prepare delivery of fighter jets to Kiev

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The European powers used the European Union (EU) summit in Brussels at the end of last week, in which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky participated as a guest, for a massive escalation of the war offensive against Russia.

Earlier in the week, at a meeting with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Zelensky demanded the delivery of F-16 fighter jets. At the summit, numerous European leaders responded favourably to this demand, which vastly increases the risk of a comprehensive war with Russia and thus a third world war fought with nuclear weapons.

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, who welcomed Zelensky in the European Parliament, stressed the importance of fighter jet deliveries to Ukraine: “Now, as the next step, states must consider rapidly deploying long-range systems and aircraft.” The European “reaction” must be “appropriate to the threat—and the threat is existential.”

Others spoke along similar lines. “All options are on the table, including the delivery of F-16 jets,” said Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra. And Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said, “If we had them, we would help Ukraine with all the means at our disposal.” She added, “The price to be paid in the face of Russian aggression increases with every hesitation.”

Although no European government has yet made concrete commitments, it is clear that the delivery of fighter jets is being prepared behind the backs of the population. At a joint press conference with EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President Charles Michel, Zelensky boasted that his visit to the UK had already brought decisions on the supply of long-range weapons and the training of pilots closer and was “really a step towards the supply of fighter aircraft.”

Zelensky said that at the EU summit, he was told by several leading EU representatives in bilateral talks that they were prepared to supply Ukraine with “the necessary weapons.” This included “aircraft.” He initially avoided going into concrete details of his talks in London, Paris and Brussels. When asked about them by a Ukrainian journalist, he said, “There are certain agreements that are not public but that are positive.”

The procedure is following the same well-known pattern. The delivery of battle tanks was also decided long before the public announcement. Germany, which has been portrayed as hesitant for a long time, is currently assembling an entire army of tanks against Russia. Following the initial announcement that 14 Leopard 2 battle tanks would be delivered to Kiev, the German government released the export permit for an additional 178 Leopard 1 battle tanks last week.

On Thursday, the German arms company Rheinmetall also announced that it is planning to deliver Lynx and Panther tanks to Ukraine. These are “the most modern armoured vehicles and battle tanks,” boasted the head of the group, Armin Papperger, in an interview with the *Handelsblatt*. The tanks could be built in Germany and Hungary, but they are “ready to build a plant for the production of the Panther in Ukraine.”

The tank deliveries are being advanced aggressively. During his inaugural visit to Kiev earlier this week, the new German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius announced that he would send the promised Leopard 2 battle tanks by the end of March. By this summer 20-25 Leopard I tanks will follow and another 80 by the end of the year. “The goal is to reach over 100 Leopards by the first or second quarter of 2024, which means at least three battalions—including the materials to be procured for spare parts and ammunition and, of course, training,” he said.

Training for “600 sergeants” has also begun. And by the end of the month, there will be “more guided missiles,

another five Cheetahs (self-propelled anti-aircraft guns), another five Dachs tankdozers and five Biber bridge-laying tanks,” explained Pistorius.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz also assured Kiev in his government statement before the EU summit of further massive arms deliveries and boasted that “in continental Europe,” Germany is “far ahead in the supply of weapons and ammunition” to Ukraine. “We have always worked closely and confidentially with our allies, whether it was on the delivery of self-propelled howitzers or multiple rocket launchers, to provide Ukraine with anti-aircraft weapons, or on our decision to deliver armored personnel carriers and, ultimately, battle tanks.”

The Chancellor absurdly claimed, “We don’t make decisions that make NATO a war party.” This is an obvious lie. In fact, NATO has long been at war with Russia and is now escalating it. Representatives of the federal government openly say this. “We are fighting a war against Russia and not against each other,” Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) recently said at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

The fact that German imperialism, in particular, which already tried twice in the 20th century to subjugate Russia militarily, is again striking out against Russia underlines the real character of the German-European war policy. It is not about defending “freedom” and “democracy” but geostrategic and economic interests and the struggle for world power in the 21st century.

Germany's ruling class has long pursued the goal of rearming and organizing Europe under German leadership. The reactionary invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which was provoked by the NATO powers, has served as a welcome pretext. In his government statement, Scholz called for the necessary unity of “a geopolitical European Union” to be “an organising power in the multipolar world of the 21st century.”

The entire war summit in Brussels shed light on the reactionary character of the ruling class. It is responding to the deep crisis of capitalism and the growing revolutionary movement of the working class on the continent with a desperate turn to war and fascism. When Zelensky ended his provocative war speech in Brussels with the cry of the Ukrainian fascists “Slava Ukraini,” the entire EU Parliament rose to applause.

Initially, the focus of the EU summit was supposed to be on tightening refugee policy. With the measures adopted at the summit, the EU is implementing the programme of far-right parties, such as the Alternative for

Germany or the Italian ruling party Fratelli d'Italia. While in the Turkish-Syrian border area countless refugees fell victim to the earthquake disaster, the EU states committed themselves in the final declaration to the massive expansion of “Fortress Europe.”

Among other things, the EU reiterated its “full support” for the notorious border protection agency Frontex, also in order to “support increased repatriations.” In addition, “border protection capacities and infrastructure” will be expanded and additional “means of surveillance, including air surveillance, and equipment” will be made available.

Opposition to this militaristic and anti-working class policy is developing all over the continent. In France, millions protested again over the weekend against President Macron’s planned pension reform. In Madrid, hundreds of thousands took to the streets for better health care. In the UK, millions of workers from different sectors have been taking part in a massive strike wave for months. In Germany, 11 million workers are engaged in collective bargaining and their demands are underlined by strikes and demonstrations.

Strikes are also increasing in other European countries against job and wage cuts, and the devastating effects of inflation and the sanctions against Russia, which were strengthened at the EU summit.

In the statement “The Mass Strike Movement, War and the Revolutionary Crisis in Europe,” the sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Europe wrote, “The sentiments moving millions into struggle have an incipiently anti-capitalist, anti-militarist and socialist character.” The task is to transform the growing revolutionary movement of the working class into a conscious movement for socialism. This means intensifying the struggle for the United Socialist States of Europe and the construction of Socialist Equality parties as new mass parties of the working class.



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