German Chancellor Scholz pushes for rearmament and war against Russia

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One year ago, on February 27, 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrats, SPD) gave his infamous speech declaring a "new era" in German foreign policy. Shortly after Russia's reactionary invasion of Ukraine provoked by NATO, he announced comprehensive arms deliveries to Kiev and a massive increase in the number of German army (Bundeswehr) troops in Eastern Europe. His speech culminated in the announcement of the €100 billion special fund for the Bundeswehr, the largest rearmament offensive since Hitler.

On Thursday, on the anniversary of his speech, Scholz again delivered a government statement in the Bundestag. It lived up to his war speech a year ago. The chancellor left no doubt that the German government, under his leadership, will intensify the war against Russia and accelerate Germany's return to an aggressive military and great power policy.

Scholz explicitly advocated continuing the war in Ukraine until the defeat of the nuclear-armed power Russia and ruled out a diplomatic solution. "You can't negotiate with a gun to your head—except for your own submission," he explained. "There will be no military victory for Russia, also because we and our partners continue to support Ukraine."

Then he boasted that the German government had provided support of "more than €14 billion in the past 12 months." The arms deliveries allowed Kiev to "defend itself and persevere."

"This is due to the artillery and air defense systems, which have been operating very effectively for months," continued Scholz. "And we continue to expand our support: since the beginning of the year alone with the Patriot air defense system, the Marder armored vehicle and the Leopard 1 and 2 battle tanks."

Currently, Germany is working on the establishment of a veritable tank army for deployment against Russia. The federal government alone has issued export permits for nearly 200 battle tanks and is increasing pressure on other states—such as formally neutral Switzerland—to also provide battle tanks and other heavy weaponry.

In his speech, Scholz promised to provide additional self-propelled howitzers, multiple rocket launchers, artillery ammunition, anti-tank weapons and wheeled artillery for Kiev. Germany will have "further self-propelled Geppard anti-aircraft guns and an additional air defense system IRIS-T … ready in the coming weeks." At the same time, Scholz said, "We are working with industry on reliable supplies of ammunition and spare parts."

Scholz's war list continued seemingly without end. He stated that Germany would play a leading role in the training of the Ukrainian army. "A total of more than 3,000 soldiers from Ukraine have been trained by the Bundeswehr since the beginning of the war, and for more than 1,000 soldiers, the start of training in Germany is imminent," he commented. In close coordination with initiatives by the United States and Britain, Germany is thus "the central training ground for Ukrainian soldiers in Europe."

The chancellor justified his war agenda with well-known propaganda. Although NATO wars in the Middle East (Iraq, Syria), Central Asia (Afghanistan), North Africa (Libya) and in Europe (Serbia) have laid waste to entire countries over the past three decades, Scholz claimed to support Ukraine "in order to defend the European peace order." In every decision his government makes, Scholz added, "we make sure that NATO does not become a war party." On this, Scholz said, he "agrees with the American president."

In fact, Berlin and Washington have long been "war parties." And as the Ukrainian army in the Donbas is increasingly pushed onto the defensive, they are working to further increase their war effort. Scholz traveled to the US immediately after his government declaration to meet Biden in a one-on-one conversation. It is clear what is going on behind the scenes: Further military aid to Ukraine—the US government announced another $400 million package before Scholz arrived—and an even more massive NATO intervention is being prepared.

All the talk of "peace," "democracy" and the alleged defense of international law serves only to obscure the predatory character of the imperialist war and its real goal: a military victory over Russia in Ukraine and the subjugation and plundering of the geostrategically central and resource-rich country.

Scholz claimed in his speech that there was "only one man who is solely responsible for this war" and could end it, "and the man's name is Vladimir Putin." This claim is utterly preposterous. The Russian invasion is reactionary, but it has a history and historical causes, and it was prepared and provoked

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by the imperialist powers.

"In fact, the conflict with Russia is a continuation of an unending series of wars and interventions launched by American imperialism since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991," the WSWS wrote in a perspective on the anniversary of the Russian invasion. "The conflict with Russia was set into motion by the decades-long expansion of NATO up to the borders of Russia."

Germany played a key role from the outset. Berlin supported the right-wing coup in Kiev in February 2014 and allied with fascist forces such as Svoboda and the Right Sector to bring an anti-Russian regime to power. Subsequently, the Ukrainian army was systematically prepared for war. Last December, Scholz's predecessor Angela Merkel admitted that diplomatic initiatives, such as the Minsk agreement, only served to gain time to arm Ukraine.

Scholz spoke in his speech about the extent of German NATO troops in Eastern Europe, which is equivalent to a war mobilisation against Russia. The Bundeswehr has a brigade in Lithuania, supports Poland and Slovakia in air defense, and is leading the NATO spearhead rapid response force this year, "for which we retain 17,000 soldiers in high readiness." From 2025 onwards, Germany will initially deploy 30,000 soldiers for the future NATO military structure—continuously and in high operational readiness.

German war policy extends far beyond Eastern Europe and Russia. The ruling class is using the conflict in Ukraine to implement a return to the aggressive foreign and great power policy that was already announced in 2013-14. After two lost world wars in the 20th century, German imperialism is once again preparing to organize Europe under its leadership in order to participate in the struggle for the redivision of the world in the 21st century.

In his speech, Scholz also threatened China and praised a "geopolitical Europe that is internationally competitive" and "holds its own in the multipolar world of the 21st century and sets standards." His government has already taken important steps in this direction. These included the integration of "Ukraine, Moldova and, in future, Georgia" into the European Union and the "close integration of the defence industry in Europe." Specifically, Scholz praised the FCAS air combat system planned together with France and Spain and the "European Sky Shield Initiative initiated by Germany to strengthen Europe's air defense."

Another part of his speech was devoted to the comprehensive militarization of Germany. The massive defense projects, which are financed by the Bundeswehr special fund—Scholz mentioned, among other things, the purchase of F-35 fighter jets—should have "contracts finalised this year." Also, "the replenishment of howitzers, ammunition and other goods that we have delivered from Bundeswehr stockpiles to Ukraine" will be "taken care of in the coming months."

At the same time, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius and he talked to the defense industry "about a real change of gear to a fast, predictable and efficient procurement of armaments for the Bundeswehr and other European armies." We need "an ongoing production of important weapons, equipment and ammunition" and "long-term contracts and down payments to build manufacturing capacity" and "an industrial base" here in Germany, he continued. All this obviously has nothing to do with peace but with the preparation for total war.

The costs of militarist madness are borne by the working class—as cannon fodder on the battlefields and in the form of massive attacks on their living standards. Already last year, when the special fund was enshrined in the Basic Law in order to permanently fix rearmament, the health budget was massively reduced in the midst of the pandemic. Now the war budget is to be increased again—even before Scholz's speech, Pistorius demanded an additional €10 billion annually—and further attacks are planned.

But the same contradictions that drive the imperialist war and the explosion of German militarism also create the objective basis for overcoming them. Resistance to militarist and anti-working class policies, which are ultimately pursued by all capitalist governments, is developing all over the world. In recent days, tens of thousands of public service workers in Germany have taken part in warning strikes. Comprehensive strikes and protests against attacks on pensions, jobs and wages are also developing in France, the UK and other European countries.

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 declared, "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 linking the struggle against war with the struggle against its root, capitalism, and building the Socialist Equality Parties as new mass parties of the working class. The aggressive war course of the ruling class in Germany, which is supported by all parties in parliament, shows that these tasks are on the order of the day.

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