

The German chancellor and government intensify their pro-war policies

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Germany's coalition government is intensifying its pro-war policies. The focus of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government statement on Thursday was the NATO war offensive against Russia. Although this is leading to a direct clash between the nuclear powers—on Wednesday, Russian warplanes caused the downing of a US drone—Scholz again spoke out in favour of further arms deliveries to Kiev in order to defeat Russia militarily in Ukraine.

What he had “said on this subject two weeks ago here in the German Bundestag” remained “unchanged: We support Ukraine in its fight for freedom, for self-determination, for territorial integrity—politically, financially, humanitarily and also with weapons.” And support would continue “as long as it is necessary.”

The words “freedom” and “self-determination” are familiar propaganda. In fact, the NATO powers provoked Moscow's reactionary invasion of Ukraine. Now, they are continually escalating the war to subjugate Russia. Moreover, Germany's ruling class is using the conflict to reestablish itself as Europe's leading military power after losing two world wars.

Currently, an aggressive campaign is underway to push rearmament even faster. On Tuesday, Eva Högl (Social Democrat, SPD), the Bundestag (parliamentary) defence commissioner, presented the new defence report and painted the absurd picture of an ailing and completely broken German army. The Bundeswehr (armed forces) were “not fully operational” and had “too little of everything. The media voiced a similar lament. Germany's “leading power” was “running on fumes,” complained the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. And the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* claimed, “Militarily, Germany remains a developing country.”

With its propaganda offensive, the ruling class is

pursuing two interrelated goals. The first is to further increase annual military spending and the “special fund for the Bundeswehr” of over €100 billion that was approved last year. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) demanded €10 billion more per year even before the budget debate began in the Bundestag, and Högl has brought the sum of €300 billion into play for the special fund—more than six times the amount the government currently spends on health and education.

The second is to further increase military support for the Ukrainian army, which is increasingly on the defensive in the Donbas and suffering terrible losses. The sums that Germany has already provided to Kiev are enormous. In the “past 12 months,” Germany had “supported Ukraine and its citizens bilaterally with more than €14 billion—a very substantial contribution that is also appropriate for our country,” Scholz boasted in the Bundestag. Added to this, he said, was “the German share” of European support, “which for this year alone totals €18 billion.”

Scholz's message was that Germany continue this course. Together with its “European partners,” his government would “continue to ensure that Ukraine receives weapons and equipment to hold out and defend itself.” He said it was particularly important to “quickly provide Ukraine with the ammunition it needs.” At the upcoming EU summit next week, he said, “further measures will be decided together with our EU partners to achieve an even better continuous supply.”

At their last meeting, EU defence ministers had already agreed to massively ramp up ammunition production and organize a veritable war economy across Europe. According to reports, Germany alone plans to spend €20 billion on munitions over the next few years. The same arms companies that supplied Hitler's Wehrmacht (army) are setting up new

production facilities in Germany and, like Rheinmetall, are even planning to build a tank factory directly in Ukraine.

In his government declaration, Scholz left no doubt about the reactionary and anti-working class character of the war and rearmament policy. It is not about “freedom,” “human rights” and “democracy,” but about predatory imperialist interests. And it is the working class that is supposed to foot the bill for this militarist madness.

Scholz announced that “economic relations will be diversified, especially with regard to the purchase of raw materials.” And the EU’s competitiveness would be “very intensively addressed. This was “the prerequisite for economic success, and our competitiveness is the prerequisite for Europe’s future as a geopolitical player.” “Competitiveness” was only possible “in the long run, on the basis of stable budgets throughout Europe,” he said.

“Competitiveness” and “stable budgets” are code words for the dismantling of social welfare systems and all remaining working class gains. Across Europe and around the world, capitalist governments—with the active support of the unions—are organizing historic attacks on working class living standards, while increasingly resorting to dictatorial methods.

On Thursday, France’s Macron government announced it would use the undemocratic mechanism of Article 49.3 of the French constitution to force the hated pension reforms past parliament and against the declared will of the people. For weeks, millions in France—as in many other European countries—have been striking and protesting to express their anger against the planned attacks and pro-war policies. The response of the ruling class is violence. Yesterday, police in Paris attacked striking refuse workers with tear gas and batons. Earlier, the government had announced that it would forcibly conscript the workers. On Friday night, police attacked protesting workers across the country.

Resistance is also growing in Germany, and the ruling class is responding, as in the past, by stepping up militarism at home as well. On Thursday, Lieutenant General Carsten Breuer replaced General Eberhard Zorn as inspector general of the Bundeswehr, the most senior military officer. Breuer is the commander of the Bundeswehr Territorial Command, which was newly established only last autumn, and had previously

headed the German government’s Coronavirus Crisis Staff. In his new role as inspector general, he will not only push the return to “national and alliance defence”—a euphemism for preparing for full-scale wars—initiated by Zorn, but also strengthen the military as an instrument of domestic repression.

To stop the danger of dictatorship and world war, workers must combine their struggles across Europe and internationally and conduct them independently of the unions and establishment parties based on a socialist program. This requires the formation of independent rank-and-file action committees and the building of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the Fourth International as the new political leadership of the working class.

All capitalist parties support the right-wing and militarist course of the German government. Significantly, Scholz’s speech was applauded not only by deputies of the governing SPD, Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Green parties, but also, according to the minutes, by representatives of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the Left Party.



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