

Chancellor Merz's declaration of war on Russia

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"We are not at war, but we are no longer at peace either," said Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Monday at an event hosted by the *Rheinische Post* in Düsseldorf.

These words, from the head of government of the world's third-largest economy, should be understood not as a warning but as a declaration of war. For weeks, leading political figures in Germany and other European powers have been stepping up their war propaganda against Russia and turning the Baltic Sea into a future theatre of war.

Incidents that used to be settled with diplomatic protests—such as the alleged violation of Polish airspace by Russian fighter jets over Baltic waters or the sighting of drones of unknown origin over Denmark—are serving as a pretext for rhetorical and military escalation against Russia.

"Russia is becoming more and more of a danger for NATO," declared German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius over the weekend at the Warsaw Security Forum before 2,500 high-ranking participants from 90 countries. He said Russian President Putin was trying to provoke NATO and probe the alliance's vulnerabilities. What was needed, he said, was unity, clarity of action, and cooperation.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul claimed without the slightest evidence that Moscow's violations of NATO airspace were "not errors, but deliberate grey-zone attacks" with the aim of "testing our resolve." "We leave no doubt whatsoever that we are determined and ready to repel any threat together," he stressed.

Other leading politicians, such as the Christian Democratic (CDU/CSU) foreign policy spokesman and CDU executive board member Jürgen Hardt and minister of state at the Foreign Ministry Florian Hahn (CSU), are already calling to "respond to every military border violation with military means," as well as for the "shoot-down of Russian fighter jets over NATO territory"—which would lead to open war with nuclear-armed Russia.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has even proposed a naval blockade against Russia. He claims Russia is using its oil tankers to fly drones into the airspace of NATO states. Therefore, he says, Europe has the right to

close sea lanes to Russian ships.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk called for unity against "Russian aggression." "This war is our war as well," he said at the Warsaw Security Forum. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, he said, was part of a political project aimed at subjugating other peoples. "If we lose this war, the consequences will affect not only our generation, but also the next generation in Poland, Europe, the United States, and everywhere in the world."

In Poland itself, a veritable war hysteria now prevails, stoked by the government. The program "Safe Poland," a joint initiative of public broadcaster TVP and the government, gives advice every morning from 9 to 12 on how to behave in the event of war. Survival backpacks filled with special rations, powdered energy drinks, water filters, flashlights, compasses, and other items for surviving wartime are sold out. With a military budget of 4.7 percent of GDP, Poland ranks first in Europe.

The war campaign against Russia goes hand in hand with an acceleration of rearmament and the transformation of the Baltic Sea into a combat zone. Germany in particular plays a leading role. War credits totalling one trillion euros, approved by the new government, are intended not only to replenish weapons and ammunition stockpiles and make Germany's infrastructure "fit for war," but to reorganize the Bundeswehr (armed forces) and orient it toward a war against Russia.

Military historian Sönke Neitzel, a leading voice of German militarism for years, published a programmatic article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) over the weekend under the headline "Unleash the Bundeswehr." Citing General Scharnhorst—who reorganized the Prussian army after defeats by Napoleon's forces—Neitzel calls for a "profound reform" and a "cultural shift" within the Bundeswehr.

In place of a "culture of excessive deliberation, hedging, and deliberate delay," he argues, the "proven principle of rapid, self-reliant decision-making" must prevail. All processes must be "geared toward tangible military results in

the core mission.” The “best possible military outcome” must be rewarded, Neitzel writes.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is pushing for the construction of a “drone wall” against Russia, as advocated by the Baltic states. The EU intends to provide billions of euros for this. As the FAZ summarizes the EU’s thinking: the war of the future can “no longer be fought with the weapons of the past: tanks, heavy artillery, combat aircraft... The use of drones has changed everything.”

The plan is supported by NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Alexis Grynkewich. CDU defence politician Roderich Kiesewetter is even calling for the formal declaration of a state of tension in order to speed up procurement of drones and other armaments and give the Bundeswehr more options for countering drones over Germany.

In the Baltic itself, one NATO exercise against Russia follows another. In the Quadriga exercise currently underway, 8,000 German soldiers and 400 troops from other NATO states are rehearsing the “large-scale redeployment of forces” to Lithuania. Everything is being practiced—from the involvement of civilian agencies and transport by road, rail, and sea to combat and sabotage operations.

As part of Operation Eastern Sentry, which began on September 12, NATO has intensified control of the airspace over the Baltic Sea and other countries along NATO’s eastern flank. Germany, France, Denmark, and the United Kingdom have sent additional fighter aircraft for this purpose.

Military units are also being deployed for ostensibly civilian purposes. For example, the German Navy sent the frigate Hamburg to Copenhagen to protect an informal EU summit there from Russian drones.

The war build-up against Russia has nothing to do with “defence.” The claim that Russia wants to militarily subjugate all of Europe is propaganda, comparable to the narratives that prepared the First and Second World Wars. Moscow’s war against Ukraine is a reactionary response to NATO’s encirclement of Russia, which the Putin regime perceived as an existential threat. Unable to appeal to the Ukrainian masses, the Kremlin’s oligarchic regime hoped to force NATO to back down with a “special military operation”—a catastrophic miscalculation.

The real driving force behind the war offensive against Russia is the deep crisis of global capitalism. As in the first half of the twentieth century, the imperialist powers are trying to resolve this crisis through war and dictatorship. In the United States, President Trump is establishing a police-military dictatorship, swearing the army to loyalty to the

“leader” and threatening the entire world with punitive tariffs and military force.

Germany and the European powers are taking the same path. With control over Ukraine and an offensive against Russia, Germany is pursuing the same expansionist imperialist aims as in the First and Second World Wars.

In several recent appearances before business associations, Chancellor Merz emphasized that rearmament not only serves the offensive against Russia but is also meant to enable German imperialism to pursue its interests independently of the United States. His message was that the relationship between the EU and Germany and the US would remain difficult in the long term. “We must achieve greater independence in Europe from Russia, from China, and indeed also from America,” he said a week ago at an event of the VCI chemical industry association in Berlin.

On Friday, Merz again sharply criticized the United States at an event hosted by the Schwarz Group. With a fortune of just under \$50 billion, Dieter Schwarz is considered Germany’s richest man. He made his wealth through the Lidl and Kaufland retail chains, but the Schwarz Group has for several years also been active in IT. Schwarz Digits is working to build a “sovereign cloud for Europe” to make the continent independent of American cloud providers.

Merz shares that goal. Just as Trump likes to appear in the company of American multibillionaires, Merz seeks proximity to German oligarchs. He invited Gerd Chrzanowski, head of the Schwarz Group, as a guest speaker to the first closed-door retreat of the governing coalition, currently taking place at Berlin’s Villa Borsig.

The imperialist war alliance of government and oligarchs can only be stopped by an international movement of the working class, which is being made to bear the costs of war and militarism. It must link the fight against war, dictatorship, social cuts, unemployment, and nationalism with a socialist perspective to overthrow capitalism. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the Fourth International are fighting for.



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