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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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09.10.2022

European Political Community summit pledges to escalate war on Russia

On Thursday and Friday, heads of state from 44 European countries met in the Czech capital, Prague, for the inaugural summit of the European Political Community (EPC). Proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron in May, it brought together European Union (EU) countries, Britain, and a dozen countries along Russia's western border.

The Prague summit was a politically sinister event. It called to arm Ukraine against Russia, even after reports emerged that US President Joe Biden had told top financial donors that the NATO war on Russia threatened to lead to nuclear Armageddon. Even though Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has just proposed to launch pre-emptive strikes on Russia, the summit heard and applauded a bellicose video address from Zelensky.

After the summit, Macron held a joint press conference with Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala and Moldovan President Maia Sandu. They stressed that they are committed to military escalation against Russia, even though it threatens to cut off energy supplies to Europe and, by the admission of the US president, to unleash the destruction of human civilization itself.



[AP Photo/Petr David Josek]

Macron hailed the presence of Zelensky and insisted that the summit had put to rest any doubts as to whether the EU powers supported an aggressive military posture against Russia. He said, “We have made clear the unity of 44 European countries who, all 44 of them, clearly condemned Russian aggression and gave their support to Ukraine. This has great value, because previously certain doubts had existed.”

Macron alluded briefly to the many conflicts involving states represented at the Prague summit, which underscore the unviability of the EPC itself. Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars in the last two years, unresolved border conflicts continue between Serbia and Kosovo, and Greece and Turkey are on the verge of war over gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Sandu similarly endorsed the US-European arming of Ukraine to retake Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine now annexed by Russia—a move that threatens to provoke nuclear war.

“Peace starts with helping Ukraine restore its territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders. We are united in condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of its territories,” she said, adding, “Energy security was the other major topic we discussed. We should not allow the energy crisis to undermine our democracy.”

Indeed, the rising danger of NATO military operations against Russia leading to all-out nuclear war goes hand-in-hand with the rising economic impact of NATO's cut-off of Russian energy. Food and energy prices are already surging in Europe, with inflation running at over 10 percent, and energy shortages will devastate Europe's economy and society this winter. Over 400,000 job losses are expected in Germany and a half million in Italy alone as electricity cut-offs shutter industry.

Europe's leading imperialist powers are responding by stepping up the offensive against Russia. In a press statement, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz hailed the EPC summit, declaring, "Clearly, this is now a meeting that cannot be thought of in isolation from the Russian attack on Ukraine. But it is also good to see that we are all supporting Ukraine in very different ways: financially, with humanitarian aid, and many are also supplying weapons, as Germany is doing."

Scholz boasted to the German daily *Die Welt*, "These [arms] include decidedly efficient weapons, such as the self-propelled howitzer 2000, multiple rocket launchers and the Gepard anti-aircraft tank. It is these weapons that proved particularly effective during the counteroffensive by the Ukrainian armed forces." Germany and Brussels "will continue to support Ukraine for as long as necessary," he added.

Scholz said Germany will also make an "important contribution" to the planned EU training mission for the Ukrainian armed forces. On Friday, after an informal EU summit in Prague, he said the mission would be "large in scope" and that he expected decisions to be announced as early as next week. Currently, the EU would provide training programs outside Ukraine for some 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers, 2,800 of whom could be special forces.

The EU is massively escalating military aid for Ukraine against Russia. In Prague, EU Parliament President Roberta Metsola urged EU countries to deliver modern tanks to Ukraine. Ideal would be "Leopard 2 tanks, for example," she told AFP, referring to Germany's main battle tank. France is considering supplying more Caesar howitzers to Ukraine, according to Macron. Under discussion, according to AFP, are six to 12 more Caesars, which were originally intended for Denmark.

To defeat Russia and subjugate this resource-rich country, European powers are ready to risk World War III, brushing aside the threat of nuclear Armageddon. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stressed that they take Russian President Vladimir Putin's threats seriously, but will not be blackmailed by his words.

Media warmongers aggressively spread the lie that "fear" of the threat of nuclear war is worse than nuclear war itself. "U.S. President Biden warns of Armageddon in the face of Russian threats of nuclear weapons. The concern is justified, of course," writes the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. "But: more dangerous than nuclear blackmail is only the surrender to it."

The EPC summit and the response by the European powers and bourgeois media starkly poses critical political issues to workers entering into struggle against inflation and war in Europe and internationally. There is no way to oppose the escalating NATO imperialist war with Russia within the official framework of capitalist politics.

Indeed, the EU powers have, over the recent years, carried out a remarkable shift in their public position towards US-led war against Russia. After Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as president, Berlin and Paris both called for an independent EU military policy. As part of this policy, they at times criticized Washington's most aggressive measures against Russia. Macron raised this in an interview in *The Economist* in November 2019, shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

NATO, Macron declared in 2019, is "brain-dead." He said that its policy of stoking a war in Syria between Russia and Turkey, a NATO member state, was "an enormous problem for NATO." US policy towards Russia, he added, was completely unhinged. "When the United States is very harsh with Russia," Macron declared, "it is a form of governmental, political, and historical hysteria."

Calling to "reconsider our position towards Russia," Macron told *The Economist* that France can "talk to everyone and so build relations to prevent the world from going up in a conflagration."

Today, Scholz, Macron and others are pressing recklessly ahead with a war on Russia, even though they and Biden all know the world could go up in a conflagration.

It is apparent that, to use Macron's terms, a form of governmental, political and historical hysteria has seized the imperialist ruling classes. Amid the economic crisis caused by their disastrous official handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and bank bailouts to the rich, they are intensifying their drive for plunder. Having encountered no opposition in the political establishment to policies of mass infection in the COVID-19 pandemic, they are heading for nuclear World War III.

The divisions among the heads of state attending the EPC summit do not make a conflagration less likely, but more so. Beyond the Azeri-Armenian, Serbian-Kosovar, and Greco-Turkish conflicts, a row has broken out between France, on the one side, and Germany and Spain on the other over whether to build a gas pipeline linking Spain to Germany via France. Anger erupted also over Germany's massive €200 billion energy package. All these geopolitical conflicts and conflicts over control of the energy markets tear European capitalism apart, making it even less capable of avoiding a Third World War.

The force that must be mobilized against the ruling elites' drive to war is the European and international working class. Already, a wave of strikes and protests is underway across Europe, from port, transport and education strikes in Britain, refinery strikes in France, and warning strikes across multiple industries in Germany. The decisive issue is to develop the struggles of workers and youth as a conscious, international movement against imperialist war and for the United Socialist States of Europe.

World Socialist 08.10.2022