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G7 leaders hold war summit in Hiroshima

The G7 summit, which took place in Hiroshima, Japan from May 19 to 21, marks a major step toward a nuclear third world war. The G7—the US, Japan, Germany, UK, France, Italy and Canada—issued an ultimatum to Russia that leaves no room for diplomatic solutions.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Selensky in Hiroshima [Photo by Bundesregierung/Zahn]

“We urge Russia to stop its ongoing aggression and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops and military equipment from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine,” the statement said.

The G7 members thus declared the unconditional surrender of Moscow—including the evacuation of Crimea and the strategically important Sevastopol naval base—a prerequisite for any peace negotiations. They offered no concessions, such as security guarantees for Moscow or the renunciation of Ukraine’s admission to NATO. Instead, the

statement pledged “to provide the financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support Ukraine requires for as long as it takes,” i.e., until Russia’s military defeat.

The decision to arm Ukraine with nuclear-capable F16 fighter jets comes in this context. The F16s are able to carry the war deep into Russian territory. Another military escalation, which involves NATO troops directly in the fighting and threatens to set Europe ablaze, is therefore inevitable.

The G7 leaders did not limit themselves to demand Russia’s complete withdrawal. They also intend to force regime change in Moscow and bleed the country economically and financially. They decided to impose further sanctions on Russia and ensure “that Russia pays for the long-term reconstruction of Ukraine” and that its leaders are brought to justice “for war crimes and other atrocities.”

It is obvious that Vladimir Putin’s regime cannot meet this ultimatum without signing its own death warrant. It is an ultimatum whose sole purpose is to continue the war until NATO achieves its goal: the establishment of a puppet regime in Moscow and the destruction of the Russian Federation. The G7 is consciously accepting the risk of a nuclear escalation.

There are historical precedents for such unacceptable ultimatums. The most famous is the ultimatum Austria-Hungary issued to Serbia in 1914 after a Bosnian-Serb nationalist murdered the Austrian heir to the throne in Sarajevo. Austria wanted the war and was supported by Germany. It used Serbia’s evasive response to open World War I.

The great powers did not simply “slip” unintentionally into war, as some historians claim. They wanted the war or at least accepted it approvingly. The political decisions, provocations and conspiracies, whose fatal interweaving eventually led to the greatest bloodbath in the history of mankind to date, were the conscious expression of class interests that did not allow a progressive way out of the impasse of capitalism.

The four decades before the war were marked by a tremendous development of the productive forces that broke the framework of the nation-state. The emerging industrial powers of Germany and the US were thirsting for raw materials, markets and investment opportunities that were controlled by their rivals Britain and France.

The capitalist system, bound to private property and the nation-state, did not permit a rational organization of the world economy in the interests of social needs. Within the framework of capitalism, there was only one answer to the contradiction between the world economy and the nation-state: the violent redivision of the world among the

imperialist superpowers. This was the main reason for the First and also for the Second World War.

War on China

The objective contradictions that drive the G7 powers into war today are much stronger than they were in 1914. Their war policy stems from a position of weakness. When the G7 was founded in 1975, its members accounted for 60 percent of global economic output. Today, it is only 31 percent.

The US has long been trying to make up for its dwindling economic power through military force, supported by the European powers. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria pursued this goal. NATO's proxy war in Ukraine against Russia follows on from these wars.

After the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO moved ever further eastward. The Putin regime responded with a reactionary military attack on Ukraine. NATO used it as a pretext for a full-scale war, not just against Russia. The US, in particular, regards China as its main economic and geopolitical rival.

This was also evident in Hiroshima. The final declaration of the summit attacked China with extraordinary severity. It accused Beijing of threatening the military and economic security of other countries, unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas "by force or coercion" and efforts to "distort the global economy" by "malign practices, such as illegitimate technology transfer or data disclosure" and "economic coercion."

The concluding statement continued, "We will keep voicing our concerns about the human rights situation in China, including in Tibet and Xinjiang where forced labor is of major concern to us." China was also urged to join the front against Russia, with the statement urging Beijing "to press Russia to stop its military aggression, and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine."

At the insistence of Scholz and Macron, who fear the economic consequences of an abrupt break with China, a more conciliatory passage was also inserted. They do not want to harm China or hinder its economic progress. The G7 leaders do not want a "decoupling" from China, but only a "de-risking." But this is pure cosmetics. The message of the G7 is unequivocal: The imperialist powers are preparing for a war against the nuclear-armed power of China.

The global South

In this context, the G7 is also trying to attract the countries of the so-called Global South to its side. For this purpose, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Lula da Silva were invited to Hiroshima. Both have adopted a wait-and-see stance in the Ukraine conflict and have not supported the sanctions against Russia.

To get to work on the two, Ukrainian President Zelensky was flown in on a French government aircraft. He should, as President Macron put it, take on the role of “game changer” and, as the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote, “break up the bloc of neutrals.”

The trained actor Zelensky pulled out all the stops. He also did not shy away from equating the victims of the war in Ukraine with the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The irony of this comparison did not seem to bother him.

Indeed, the murder of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—a grave war crime under international law—was not the fault of any “villain” but of Zelensky’s ally, the United States. The dropping of the atomic bomb did not serve a military purpose, but to intimidate all real and potential opponents of the United States. It created the basis for the US-dominated postwar order that NATO defends today by risking nuclear war.

Modi agreed to meet with Zelensky and gave him a nonbinding pledge to help Ukraine “with the difficulties.” Lula refused to speak to the Ukrainian president. Both do not reject NATO’s war policy, but merely take a wait-and-see approach. For example, India is working closely with the US in preparing for war against China, but is currently unwilling to cut off its economic relations with Russia.

Finally, the escalation of the war in Ukraine and the confrontation with China, as well as the G7 unity demonstrated in Hiroshima, also serve to suppress the growing contradictions between its members themselves. In the war, the European powers depend on the support of the militarily superior US—but are striving to reduce their reliance on it.

President Macron already warned after his last trip to China that Europe should not become a “vassal” of the United States. Germany is using the war in Ukraine to revive its old dream of “living space” in the east and to once again become Europe’s military leader. Numerous articles appeared in German media outlets during the summit deploring the “dwindling influence of Europe in the New World Order” (*Der Spiegel*) and pressing for new alliances and accelerated rearmament. German Chancellor Scholz is pursuing a busy schedule of travel diplomacy. Accompanied by large business delegations, he has visited

Africa, India, Japan and South Korea twice to open up new allies and markets for Germany. The Bundeswehr (German army) is stepping up its operations in Africa.

War and Class Struggle

The First World War demonstrated that pacifist appeals to the rulers were completely ineffective. What marked the war was the unified transition of the upper and middle classes into the camp of militarism. Even the leadership of the Social Democracy, which had organized international peace congresses until shortly before the start of the war, was consumed with war fever.

Only a small Marxist minority, led by Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, resisted the chauvinist war hysteria and based themselves on the international unity of the working class and the socialist revolution. Their perspective was confirmed in October 1917, when the working class in Russia, led by Lenin and Trotsky, seized power and ended the war.

In Germany, the November Revolution stopped halfway in 1918 because the SPD allied itself with the Supreme Army Command in order to violently suppress it and defend capitalist private property. The consequences were Hitler and the Second World War.

Even today, former pacifists from the petty bourgeoisie have turned into warmongers. The Greens, SPD and parts of the Left Party are among the biggest warmongers. The danger of a nuclear catastrophe can only be averted by an international movement of the working class and youth that is completely independent of the bourgeois parties and combines the fight against war with the fight against its cause, capitalism.

The objective conditions for such a movement are developing rapidly. The enrichment of the insatiable financial oligarchy at the expense of the working class has led to the outbreak of violent class struggles worldwide. In France, workers have been rebelling for months against President Macron's pension cuts. In the US and Europe, inflation has led to a sharp increase in wage struggles, the suppression of which is increasingly difficult for trade unions.

The war in Ukraine is further aggravating class antagonisms. The higher the cost of war and armaments, the sharper the attacks on income and social benefits. In addition, there is the crisis of the bloated financial system, which threatens to drag the global economy into the abyss.

The ruling classes are reacting to the growing resistance with authoritarian measures and the further escalation of militarism and war. The democratic forms of bourgeois rule are breaking down. Ultra-right-wing figures, such as Donald Trump in the US or Giorgia

Meloni in Italy, are rising to the highest state offices. This puts revolutionary class struggles on the agenda. They must be prepared by building the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International into the new mass party of the working class.

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