

# German Greens criticize lack of military “readiness”

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At the end of the 1990s, under Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, the Green Party organized the first German combat mission since the end of the Second World War, in Yugoslavia. Since then, they are hated among workers and youth as a party of war. Meanwhile, the former pacifists have moved so far into the camp of militarism that they now attack the Christian Democrat-led defence ministry from the right.

After the *Rheinische Post* had reported on Monday morning that the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) was not able to equip its soldiers with sufficient protective vests, winter clothing and tents for their use in the NATO rapid reaction force, the Greens’ defence spokesman, Tobias Lindner, took umbrage in an interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk.

We see “a picture of operational readiness which is really frightening,” Lindner said angrily. In 2019, Germany is supposed to “make an important contribution to the spearhead of NATO,” and now not only were highly complex weapon systems lacking but “things like long underpants and tents.” He could also “imagine that this was only the tip of the iceberg” and wants to know, “what about ships, what about planes.”

Lindner went so far as to attack the remarks of Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) at the Munich Security Conference from the right. He wondered what von der Leyen “had said on the subject in Munich at the security conference.” She had said that “one cannot solve all problems with the Bundeswehr within two years.” But she had been in office for more than two years, and the equipment problems had been well known since autumn 2014 at the latest. So there would have been enough time for Frau von der Leyen to actually do something.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* has commented on von

der Leyen’s war speech in Munich. The defence minister reiterated Germany’s commitment to NATO’s spending target of two percent of GDP for the military, which is also set out in the coalition agreement between the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats (SPD), and announced a massive rearmament offensive. Above all, she wanted to “continue the turnaround of the Bundeswehr,” this meant “increasing the Bundeswehr personnel” and “continuing to invest and modernize,” she said. It concerned “a Europe that can also throw more military weight on the scales,” and the construction of a “European Defence Union” and an “Army of the Europeans.”

Although von der Leyen’s programme recalls the rearming of the Wehrmacht (Armed Forces) in the 1930s, Lindner considers it to be not aggressive enough. In principle, von der Leyen “had the whole of the last legislative period to revise processes and to ensure that one can quickly procure such simple things as tents, and that this does not take years.” He wondered about von der Leyen’s record after four years, “commissions have been set up, reports have been written, and the misery is more transparent.” But that did not mean “anything had changed.”

Lindner openly expressed solidarity with the military brass, who are placing their demands on the political class with increasing vehemence. He “had the impression” that the command staff “no longer accept that the situation be whitewashed.” At least “there is now a culture there that says, people, if you give us an order, as in this case, to spearhead NATO, then we will also say honestly what our material needs are.”

The defence ministry was also trying to “whitewash things in the parliamentary defence committee,” he said. The Greens had therefore “requested that Frau von der Leyen attend the Defence Committee this week

and comment on these press reports”. He expected “that the Minister and also the Inspectors [most senior officers] of the branches of the armed forces explain what the situation really is”. What is the situation regarding “weapons systems, what is operational”? He was “curious as to whether the grand coalition and the minister have the backbone and the courage to comment on this at the meeting”.

The criticism of Lindner and the Greens is of a piece with the positions of the neoliberal Free Democratic Party and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). The FDP parliamentary group has tabled a motion for the defence committee meeting this week to establish a committee of inquiry into the “operational readiness of the Bundeswehr.” The right-wing AfD is also heading an aggressive campaign against the army’s supposed inability to fight. “The troops lack almost everything. Despite this, the ‘grand coalition’ continued the course of underfunding,” tweeted Rüdiger Lucassen, the AfD representative in the defence committee and a former serving soldier.

The Left Party is also fully participating in the return of German militarism. The party has a total of four parliamentary deputies in the defence committee, including Christine Buchholz of Marx-21—the German sister organisation of Britain’s Socialist Workers Party—who has regularly visited German troops abroad alongside von der Leyen. Stefan Liebich, a senior Left Party representative in the Foreign Affairs Committee, also participated prominently in the Munich Security Conference. As early as 2013, he worked on the study “New Power—New Responsibility”, the blueprint for the aggressive return of German militarism to the world stage.



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