

Germany prepares for World War III with the passage of 100 billion euro “Bundeswehr Special Fund”

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The “Bundeswehr Special Fund” of more than 100 billion euros has now been agreed to by both chambers of parliament, providing a massive boost to Germany’s rearmament drive. The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) condemn this war offensive. We give voice to the massive opposition among workers to the war madness and provide a socialist perspective for the struggle against it.

With this decision, the ruling class has set into motion the biggest rearmament spiral since the fall of the Nazi regime. The political, historical and social implications are enormous. In the words of Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD), Germany—already ranked fifth among countries with the highest military budgets—will in future have “by far the largest conventional army in Europe.”

After hospitals, schools and nurseries were brought to the brink of collapse and billions were cut from education and social services amid the still-raging COVID-19 pandemic, an additional 100 billion euros will be made available overnight for the armed forces. The war budget is thus expected to rise annually to more than 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

The scale of the rearmament is gigantic. Reaching the so-called 2 percent target means that defence spending will rise from just under 50 billion euros to more than 70 billion this year alone. This represents an increase of more than 40 percent. To put the “special fund” in perspective, 100 billion euros is five times this year’s total federal budget for education and research.

The sum would be enough to support every family in Germany with €5,000 per child and at the same time pay out €360,000 in compensation for pain and suffering to the relatives of all those who officially died from coronavirus. Alternatively, the amount could be used over five years to double the number of nurses and pay their most senior colleagues a bonus of €1,400. A single billion would be

enough to install air filters against the coronavirus in all classrooms.

But instead, the money is going to the military. The Defence Ministry’s plans—in addition to cyber capabilities and space systems—call for €41 billion for the air force, €19 billion for the navy and €16 billion for the army, to be spent on nuclear bombers, warships and tanks. The war materiel is intended to enable the military to once again conduct “very large” and “highly intensive” military operations, according to the “Bundeswehr Concept” issued back in 2018.

In domestic terms, too, the rearmament offensive is a declaration of war on the population. By enshrining the special fund in the Constitution and maintaining the so-called “debt brake,” the ruling class is creating conditions to squeeze every cent of the war budget out of the working class. At the same time, any criticism of rearmament is to be made illegal.

In a resolution in 2014, when then-President Joachim Gauck and government representatives announced Germany’s return to an aggressive foreign and great power policy at the Munich Security Conference, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei warned of the far-reaching consequences of this development:

The propaganda of the postwar era—that Germany had learnt from the terrible crimes of the Nazis, had “arrived at the West,” had embraced a peaceful foreign policy and had developed into a stable democracy—is exposed as lies. German imperialism is once again showing its real colours as it has emerged historically, with all of its aggressiveness at home and abroad.

The rearmament of the Bundeswehr that has now been decided is without precedent in the history of postwar

Germany. It has unmistakable parallels to Hitler's "rearmament" of the 1930s, when the ruling class installed a fascist dictatorship and rearmed the country within a very short time, preparing it for World War II. The strategy documents of the military and the war speeches of leading politicians leave no doubt that the government is once again pursuing the old "great power" goals.

Then, as now, German imperialism aspired to bring Europe under its domination and to emerge as a leading military world power. "Germany's destiny: to lead Europe in order to lead the world" was the title of a post on an official Foreign Ministry website back in 2014. Now these plans are being put into action, with all their consequences.

Media warmongers and foreign policy strategists are already calling for German and European nuclear weapons to "contain" Russia and to be able to fight out future "conflicts of interest with the leading Western power," the United States. A commentary in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* warns that "the hundred billion euros should only be a start" in meeting Germany's "security responsibility in Europe."

This rearmament is aimed directly against Russia. Eighty-one years after the German war of extermination against the Soviet Union, which claimed the lives of almost 30 million people, German combat troops are again marching into Eastern Europe. At the same time, Germany is arming the Ukrainian army to the teeth, which is riddled with far-right forces, and pursuing its declared goal of defeating Russia.

Contrary to official propaganda, the so-called "turn of the times" is not a reaction to the Russian attack on Ukraine. The ruling class is using Russia's reactionary invasion, which was systematically provoked by NATO, to put its own rearmament and war plans into action. As in the First and Second World Wars, this is not about "human rights" and "democracy," but about the conquest of spheres of influence and resources. At the same time, war policy serves to deflect explosive class tensions outward.

Unlike the bourgeois politicians who revel in and profit from militarism, war and dictatorship are deeply hated among workers in Germany and Europe. Official policy under these conditions takes the form of outright conspiracy.

The return of German militarism, which enormously fuels the danger of a third world war, is being pushed forward above all by the nominally left-wing parties in the Bundestag. The SPD, with Scholz, leads the federal government and thus also the offensive against Russia. The Greens, who in 1998-99 together with the SPD organized the war of aggression against Yugoslavia, in violation of international law, are among the most aggressive agitators and warmongers.

The Left Party and the trade unions also have both feet in

the camp of German imperialism. In the Bundestag, the Left Party voted against the special fund because its votes did not matter, since all the other parties supported the fund. Politically, however, it agrees with the war course. Leading party representatives support sanctions against Russia and arms deliveries to Ukraine and even demand the reintroduction of compulsory military service.

In a recent statement, the Verdi trade union—which has imposed pay freezes and real-wage cuts on nurses, educators and teachers—called for "sustainable improvement of the Bundeswehr" and an "improvement in the cybersecurity" of the armed forces. The German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB) also recently demanded a "substantial contribution" from Germany to the military strength of NATO and the EU.

The only party opposing the war policy of the German bourgeoisie is the SGP. Together with our sister parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International, we will intensify the struggle to build a powerful socialist anti-war movement. In doing so, we draw on the enormous opposition in the working class that is entering into open class struggles worldwide after 30 years of war and social austerity.

If the ruling class in Germany, of all countries, thinks it can grab for world power a third time after its historic crimes in two world wars, it has made its calculations without factoring in the working class and its political leadership, which must now be built as a mass party.

Become a member of the Socialist Equality Party today and take part in the struggle against militarism, war and its root: capitalism. Never Again War and Fascism!



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