

German government sends Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine

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According to media reports, Germany will send Leopard main battle tanks to Ukraine to fight Russia following the deployment of Marder infantry fighting vehicles. The decision marks a further escalation of the NATO proxy war in Ukraine against Russia and resurrects the darkest traditions of German history.

90 years after Hitler took power and 82 years after the start of the Wehrmacht's war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, German tanks emblazoned with iron crosses are once again rolling against Russia.

According to the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, the German army (Bundeswehr) will initially send at least one company with Leopard 2A6 battle tanks. In addition, German-produced battle tanks will be sent from other European countries. On Tuesday, Poland officially applied for an export permit for Leopard-2 tanks. Germany's federal government has already announced that it will issue it swiftly.

The US and possibly France also intend to supply battle tanks. Yesterday afternoon, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, citing US government sources, that Washington was preparing to deliver a "significant number" of Abrams M1 battle tanks. France's Macron government is considering the delivery of Leclerc main battle tanks.

The arming of Ukraine with Western battle tanks is only the latest culmination of NATO's escalation of the war, which increases the danger of a nuclear world war. While the warmongers in the media usually brush aside the threat while foaming at the mouth for further escalation, *Die Zeit* published an article on Tuesday that directly addressed the potential for nuclear escalation.

In the "debate" about tank deliveries, one concern "for example, is that the Chancellor's Office has an interest in the fact that not only the Europeans send

battle tanks to Ukraine. In the event that Putin uses this as an excuse to use nuclear weapons, one would want to be sure that the US will use its conventional and nuclear forces for a counter-attack, and this security will increase if the Europeans are not alone in delivering the next more powerful type of weaponry."

In other words, the insistence of the SPD-led federal government on only supplying German battle tanks if the US also sends tanks had nothing to do with military restraint or even pacifism. The German government apparently wanted the US to be on board and to assure Berlin of full conventional and nuclear support if the Russian military targets German tank deliveries or possibly other military targets.

The Federal Government should explain which exact escalation scenarios have been discussed in recent days and what the consequences of this policy will be? How many lives is the ruling class willing to sacrifice? What are the exact plans in case the war escalates into a nuclear exchange? Would German tornadoes armed with US nuclear weapons engage in "counter-strikes" in response to a possible use of Russian nuclear weapons? And how much, according to the German government, would be left of Germany and Europe only 15 minutes after such a deployment?

The ruling class knows that it is initiating a nuclear escalation spiral with the tank deliveries. Just last July, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) told the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Bundestag (parliament) that the delivery of Marder infantry fighting vehicles would be a "terrible escalation." In April, he told *Der Spiegel*: "We must do everything we can to avoid a direct military confrontation between NATO and a highly armed superpower like Russia, a nuclear power." The issue is to "prevent an escalation that leads to a third world war."

Since then, however, the German government and NATO have continued to fuel the war and have literally showered Ukraine with weapons. It is already clear that the delivery of tanks is only the preparation of an ever more comprehensive intervention by the imperialist powers—up to and including the establishment of a no-fly zone and the use of ground troops. At the meeting of the Ukraine Contact Group last Friday in Ramstein, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chief of Staff Mark Milley openly formulated the war goals: the reconquest of the territories occupied by Russia in Ukraine—including Donbass and Crimea—and thus the complete military defeat of Russia.

Above all, German imperialism does not want to be left out in the division of the spoils and is pursuing its own predatory goals as in the past. No one should be fooled by the official propaganda phrases about human rights and democracy. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) recently issued a statement entitled “No tank deliveries to Ukraine! Stop the threat of a third world war!” which explained,

Since reunification, the ruling class has been systematically working to organize Europe under German leadership in order to advance its geostrategic and economic interests worldwide...

Now it is using Russia’s reactionary invasion of Ukraine as a pretext to launch the biggest rearment since Hitler and to strike again against Russia. German imperialism is concerned not only with geostrategic interests and Russia’s vast reserves of raw materials, it is also driven by the desire for retribution for its war defeats in the 20th century.

Immediately after the escalatory decision to send Leopard tanks was reported, cheers broke out among the warmongers in the governing and opposition parties. “The decision was tough, it took way too long, but it’s inevitable in the end. That Germany approves the delivery of its Leopard 2 tank by partner countries and also delivers them itself is redemptive news for the battered and brave Ukrainian people,” said Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, chairwoman of the

Defence Committee of the Bundestag.

The deputy chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Thomas Erndl of the Christian Social Union, described the decision to the DPA as “unavoidable.” “It is important that we now lead a European alliance so that Ukraine receives a significant number of Leopard 2 tanks and training begins immediately,” he added.

The Green European politician Anton Hofreiter, who previously called for Ukraine to be either integrated into NATO or equipped with 3,200 Leopard tanks (!), celebrated “the news that Leopard tanks are also being sent to Ukraine from Germany” as “very positive news.” The vice president of the German Bundestag, Katrin Göring-Eckardt (Greens), enthused on Twitter: “The Leopard’s freed!”

The Socialist Equality Party strongly condemns the decision. “We are responding to the tank escalation by strengthening our anti-war election campaign in Berlin,” SGP chairman and lead candidate Christoph Vandreier told the *World Socialist Web Site* on Tuesday evening.

“We experience on a daily basis how great the popular opposition to the war and the return of German militarism is. It must now be organised en masse and armed with a clear political programme. Come to our central anti-war rally at Potsdamer Platz on February 4 at 11 a.m. It is high time to draw a line in the sand and stop the war madness.”



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