German government sends battle tanks against Russia and multiplies military aid to Ukraine

Johannes Stern
31 March 2023

Germany's ruling traffic light coalition government, consisting of the Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats, is escalating its offensive against Russia.

According to an official statement from the Ministry of Defense, "18 Leopard 2 including ammunition and spare parts packages as well as two 'buffalo' recovery tanks with their crews trained in Germany arrived in Ukraine on Monday."

This is the first delivery of German battle tanks to Kiev. It has far-reaching historical and political implications. 82 years after Hitler's war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, German tanks are again rolling against Russia.

"In a next step, Leopard 1 A5 will be delivered," writes the Ministry of Defense. The goal is to provide the first 25 tanks by the summer, to increase them to about 80 by the end of the year, and to at least 100 Leopard 1 A5 tanks in the course of 2024.

Kiev previously received 40 Marder armored vehicles, 34 Cheetah anti-aircraft guns, six Biber bridge-laying tanks, 15 salvage tanks, 14 self-propelled howitzer 2000s, 54 M113 armored troop carriers with munitions and three Badger tankdozers. According to the official list of "military support" for Ukraine, the German government is preparing additional large numbers of tanks and howitzers for export.

The German tank deliveries are part of a comprehensive escalation of the war by the NATO powers. On Tuesday, Ukrainian Defense Minister Reznikov boasted on Twitter that he had "taken a spin" on the Challenger 2 tank. The tanks, supplied by the United Kingdom, "recently arrived in our country," he said.

In another tweet, Reznikov thanked German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Defense Minister Boris Pistorius (both SPD) for the German tank deliveries. "Marder is an excellent example of German quality. I've tried it myself. Look forward to taming Leopards soon. I love the way they roar!"

With the tank deliveries, the imperialist powers are pursuing the goal of strengthening the Ukrainian army so that it can repel Russian troops on the front in eastern Ukraine and possibly even go on a counter-offensive. "I'm sure they [the German tanks] can make a difference at the front," Pistorius explained.

It is clear that the NATO powers can only achieve their goal if they continue to increase their war effort. This is exactly what is currently being prepared behind the backs of the population. On Wednesday, the Budget Committee released a further €12 billion in military aid to Ukraine.

"Almost four billion will be spent on the replenishment of material that the Bundeswehr (German armed forces) has handed over to Ukraine," Pistorius announced. "And the other part, about eight billion, will go into further support for Ukraine in the next few years through material, weapons and much more."

Earlier, the Treasury Department had stressed in a letter to the committee that "due to the high material losses of the Ukrainian armed forces… new material supplies are required." "We need material in the areas of air defense, armored tracked vehicles, ammunition supply for the weapons systems and artillery supplied by Germany," the letter added. After all, anyone who supplies weapons is "fundamentally under a follow-up obligation" to keep these weapon systems operational in the future.

In other words, German imperialism is preparing for years of an ever-increasing war against the nuclear-armed power Russia – with potentially catastrophic consequences. At the weekend, the Kremlin announced that it would deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. But despite the growing danger of nuclear escalation, the German government rejects any negotiated solution. Berlin's goal is to subjugate the resource-rich country and install a pro-Western puppet regime in Moscow.

"We are fighting a war against Russia," Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe at the end of January.

© World Socialist Web Site

When the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague issued an arrest warrant against the Russian president on March 17, the traffic light coalition immediately announced that it would implement it. “We are obliged to imprison President Putin if he enters German territory and to hand him over to the ICC,” said Federal Minister of Justice Marco Buschmann.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the “new epoch” in foreign policy proclaimed by Scholz and the traffic light coalition is not only directed against Russia. The ruling class is using the Russian invasion of Ukraine provoked by NATO to rearm Germany, militarize all of Europe under the leadership of Berlin and re-establish itself as the leading war power after two lost world wars.

On Tuesday, the fourth German-Dutch government consultations took place, which were all about this policy. The focus was on the integration of the Dutch army into the Bundeswehr.

“In three days, we will complete the full integration of all three Dutch army brigades into Bundeswehr structures,” Scholz announced at a joint press conference with the prime minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte. It is about “how the European Union can become an actor that is even more capable of geopolitical action than we can perceive today.”

In order to implement the war policy, Europe will be transformed into a veritable war camp. “Together with our European partners, we are trying to expand the production of ammunition in such a way that we can equip all these weapons [for Ukraine] on a regular basis,” Scholz said. “We strive to ensure that there are repair facilities everywhere, in Poland, Slovakia, Romania, so that the weapons heavily used in the war can actually be repaired quickly.”

The war-mongering media outlets are criticizing the government from the right and demanding an even faster and more comprehensive rearmament – up to the acquisition of an atomic bomb. In a commentary, *Der Spiegel* accused Scholz and the German government of not making themselves independent of the “protective power of the USA” fast enough and “forming a nuclear power out of the Federal Republic.”

“We are not prepared to endure a debate about a European nuclear umbrella. Or, even worse, about the need for a German bomb, if the French are not willing to share their force de frappe with the partners,” the head of the *Der Spiegel* office in Washington, René Pfister, raged.

The costs of the militarist madness that threatens the existence of the entire planet in the event of a nuclear escalation would be imposed on the working class from a financial point of view. Already last year, when the Bundestag (German parliament) decided on the special fund for the Bundeswehr of €100 billion, there were massive cuts, especially in the health budget. Now the federal government is discussing tripling the special fund and at the same time massively increasing the regular military budget.

The current military report states: “The 100 billion euros alone will not be enough to compensate for all shortages, for which, according to military experts, a total of 300 billion euros would be required… The level of the defense budget must move steadily and in significant steps towards NATO's 2% target… We need more double-digit billions of dollars to replenish ammunition stocks and build ammunition warehouses. These sums are not included in the special fund, but to be financed from the annual defense budget.”

The dimensions of the planned armament are gigantic and only comparable to the armament of the Wehrmacht in the 1930s. As then, the war program requires historical attacks on the working class, and, ultimately, the establishment of a dictatorship. €300 billion corresponds to almost twice the amount that the federal government currently provides for work and social affairs (€166.2 billion), 12 times the health budget (€24.5 billion), and 15 times the education budget (€21.4 billion).

But the same historical crisis of capitalism that drives the ruling class towards world war and fascism also creates the objective basis for the social revolution. In France, millions took to the streets on Tuesday against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform. And in Germany, too, there is growing resistance to anti-worker policies, which are being worked out by the government in days of behind-the-scenes coalition meetings and implemented in alliance with all of the parliamentary parties and the trade union bureaucracy.

To lead their struggle successfully, workers need to build rank-and-file committees that are independent of the unions, take the strikes and protests into their own hands, and network with their peers across Europe and internationally. They need a socialist perspective.

They “must understand the confrontation with the government as what it is in its essence: part of a European and international movement of the working class against capitalism and war,” according to a recent statement by the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) on the strikes on the railways and in the public service. “No social problem can be solved and wages cannot be defended without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and putting them under democratic control. The fight against wage cuts must be directly linked to the fight against war.”

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site