

German Economy Minister Habeck's war visit to Kiev

Johannes Stern
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At the end of last week, German Economy Minister Robert Habeck (Greens) travelled to Kiev for the second time since the start of the war. The trip underlined two things in particular: the aggressiveness with which Germany is resorting once again to militarism and war 85 years after the start of the Second World War, and the central role played in this by the formerly pacifist Greens.

On the ground, Habeck left no doubt that the German government regards the NATO war against Russia as its war, which must not be lost under any circumstances. He said he wanted to “ramp up the support that Ukraine needs in order to decide for itself how long and how this war will be fought and how it will end—successfully for Ukraine.”

His visit was a “sign that we must and will continue to support Ukraine morally,” the Greens economy minister announced. The struggle of Ukraine is a “struggle for the peace order in Europe” and therefore it is mandated to “finance this struggle in such a way that it is not lost, that it is won.”

In fact, Habeck's propaganda phrases cannot conceal what is really at stake for German imperialism. The issue is not “self-determination” and “peace,” but, as in the past, concrete geostrategic and economic interests. Already in the First and Second World Wars, Berlin tried to annex Ukraine and defeat Russia militarily. Under the Nazis, this took the form of a planned war of extermination, which led to the Holocaust and resulted in the deaths of at least 27 million Soviet citizens.

Germany is pushing ahead once again and escalating the conflict together with the other leading NATO powers in order to prevent the imminent collapse of Ukrainian troops on the front line and to achieve their insane war goals. These are to defeat the nuclear-armed power Russia in Ukraine, not only to secure control over the country, but also to subjugate and exploit Russia itself.

With a view to the “difficult military situation” at the

front, Habeck praised the German government's “urgent appeal” to expand military support for Kiev. Just a few days ago, Defense Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrats, SPD) and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) sent a joint letter to allied governments worldwide. The message was: “Deliver more and we will take the lead,” said Habeck. It is central that Berlin does not wait for others to move, but that it advances itself as a “first mover.”

And the initiative is already bearing fruit. “A lot of countries are doing a lot now,” Habeck boasted in an interview with RTL Aktuell. The Czech Republic, in particular, “has now begun to collect and purchase ammunition on a very large scale.” And other countries also procured ammunition on the world market to compensate for Kiev's “lack of artillery ammunition.” This will “increase now.”

The same goes for air defence and other areas. “We have to help Ukraine get as many weapons as possible as soon as possible,” emphasised Habeck. Just a few days before his trip, the German government announced that it would supply Kiev with an additional Patriot air defence system. The German government's official list on “military support services for Ukraine” lists, among other things, these items in the section “in preparation/implementation”:

- 50 Marder armoured personnel carriers plus ammunition
- 105 LEOPARD 1 A5 main battle tanks, plus ammunition
- 15 Cheetah anti-aircraft tanks, plus 259,680 rounds of ammunition
- 20 IRIS-T air defence systems
- Patriot and IRIS-T SLM/SLS missiles
- 36 Wheel howitzers RCH 155
- 18 self-propelled howitzers 2000
- over 370,000 rounds of 122mm and 155mm artillery

ammunition

In addition, there are six helicopters, 15 rescue tanks, eight Badger pioneer tanks, nine Beaver bridge-laying tanks, eight Wisent mine clearance tanks, 16,000 handheld anti-tank weapons, 4,015 MK 556 assault rifles, 7.75 million rounds of handgun ammunition, 8,000 PARM anti-tank mines, 164,000 rounds of 40mm ammunition, grenade launchers and hundreds of vehicles and drones.

And this is only the beginning. During his visit, Habeck repeatedly stressed that much more was needed to help Kiev win. “We need higher production, then we also have more goods that we can deliver,” he explained. “If Ukraine could benefit from it now, then we can benefit ourselves. It must not stop at theory, it must be put into practice accordingly.” After all, Ukraine must be able to conduct the war in such a way “that it is not lost, that it is won,” he said.

The composition of the economic delegation that accompanied Habeck also underlined the thoroughly militaristic character of the Greens’ foreign and economic policy. “It is not by chance that men from the arms industry in particular travel in his train,” noted the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. According to the report, these included Helmut Rauch, the head of Diehl Defence, which produces the Iris-T air defence system; a manufacturer of de-mining robots; and the manufacturer of reconnaissance drones, Quantum-Systems, whose head Florian Seibel inaugurated a new plant in Ukraine.

According to the US magazine *Politico*, a representative of Rheinmetall was also in the party. The German armaments giant, which once re-armed Hitler’s Wehrmacht, is working on the construction of an entire tank factory in Ukraine. According to Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger, the armoured vehicles Fuchs and Lynx will be built directly on site. As recently as the beginning of April, Rheinmetall delivered a further 20 Marder armoured personnel carriers to Kiev, according to a press release from the company.

After a joint meeting, Habeck and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced that the conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine, which will take place in Berlin on June 11 and 12, would focus on the arms industry in addition to bilateral projects in the energy industry and European trade in raw materials. In other words, under the guise of “reconstruction,” Berlin is advancing the exploitation and total militarisation of Ukraine.

The desires of German imperialism extend far beyond

Ukraine. The ruling class is one of the most aggressive supporters of Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians, as it does not want to stand aside from the imperialist redivision of the Middle East. And even on this war front, the Greens are in the front rank. Parallel to Habeck’s visit to Ukraine, Foreign Minister Baerbock paid a visit to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to bolster his far-right regime amid the escalation of war against Iran.

The war trips of Habeck and Baerbock underline the militaristic turn of the Greens, who in the initial years after their official founding in 1980 still presented themselves as “left” and “pacifist.” However, they vehemently rejected a socialist perspective and the working class as a revolutionary force from the beginning and instead glorified the anti-Marxist theories of the Frankfurt School and postmodernism as well as different forms of identity politics. Ever since they launched the first German foreign combat missions after Hitler in 1999 in Kosovo and 2003 in Afghanistan together with the SPD, they have been at the forefront of the new German war policy.

The chairman of the international editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, David North, analysed the deeper social and political driving forces behind this development in his book *A Quarter Century of War*. In the essay “After the Slaughter: Political lessons of the Balkan War,” he wrote: “The social structure and class relations of all the major capitalist countries have been deeply affected by the stock market boom that began in the early 1980s. Perpetually rising share values, especially the explosion in market valuations since 1995, have given a significant section of the middle class—especially among the professional elite—access to a degree of wealth they could not have imagined at the outset of their careers.”

If Habeck and Baerbock now travel to the current war fronts and call for more weapons and war, the defence of these riches is what is at stake. They are many times larger today than they were 30 years ago and their maintenance is directly linked to the escalation of World War III, and the building up of fascist forces and the establishment of an authoritarian regime at home.



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