

Germany's Green Party vice-chancellor appoints himself "defence industry minister"

Peter Schwarz
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The Greens, who began 45 years ago as pacifists, have not only become Germany's leading pro-war party, they have also lost all their inhibitions.

In an interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk on Monday, Economics Minister Robert Habeck boasted that he was now also the German "defence industry minister." "You know which party I belong to," said the Green politician, who is also vice-chancellor. "I really didn't have the idea that I would once again prioritise my work as defence industry minister, but that's what I have to do now."

Habeck defined his new task as needing to "scale up the defence industry in Germany." He continued, "If Ukraine needs the weapons and ammunition, then it should get them, and if it no longer needs them ... then the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces] can make good use of them. So, we have to scale up faster, scale up and produce more." This was "a very, very necessary decision," he concluded.

Habeck had just returned from a trip to Ukraine, which he had visited along with managers from several defence companies. He had previously invited representatives from defence companies to his ministry to discuss the expansion of production capacities.

Speaking on Deutschlandfunk, he insisted that Germany must play a pioneering role in armaments, even though it was already Ukraine's second-largest arms supplier after the US. "We have to see that we are first movers, that we lead the way, that we say we can go one step further," the Green politician stressed.

Habeck, who has a doctorate in literature and worked as a writer before making a career in politics, chooses his words carefully. And he knows what he is talking about.

There has only ever been one minister of the defence industry in German history—under Hitler. On March 17, 1940, six months after the German invasion of Poland, a decree by the Führer established the "Reich Ministry of Armaments and Munitions." Minister Fritz Todt, a member of the NSDAP (Nazi Party) since 1922 and SA (Storm Trooper) Obergruppenführer, ensured that the war economy covered the growing needs of the Wehrmacht (Armed Forces).

After Todt's accidental death in February 1942, Hitler appointed his personal architect Albert Speer as his successor, under whose leadership the ministry developed into the central control centre of the Nazi war economy. In September 1943, it was renamed the "Reich Ministry of Armaments and War Production." All other economic sectors had to be subordinated to it. Armaments production tripled between 1940 and 1944. The ministry exploited millions of forced labourers and concentration camp prisoners, only a minority of whom survived.

The fact that Habeck is now taking up this criminal tradition by appointing himself "defence industry minister" makes clear how far to the right the entire ruling class has moved. On the 300th anniversary of Immanuel Kant's birth, it is not the celebrated philosopher's "categorical imperative" that determines their thoughts and actions, but their naked imperialist class interests.

During the First and Second World Wars, German imperialism sought to satisfy its hunger for markets, raw materials and cheap labour by subjugating Europe and expanding eastwards. It is now following the same path again.

After two years of war in Ukraine, which NATO

deliberately provoked, and six months of genocide in Gaza, which the German government fully supports, there is no longer anyone in the ruling class who is in favour of military restraint. Pacifism, which relies on reason and the good will of those in power, is proving to be completely bankrupt.

Nothing demonstrates this better than the pro-war policy of the Greens, the party of the wealthy and privileged upper-middle class. They are unrivalled when it comes to dressing up a pro-war policy with moral fumes. But now this is taking on perverse forms.

They support the slaughter of the Palestinians and persecute anyone who protests against the genocide in Gaza as antisemites, while in Ukraine they cooperate with the admirers of Nazi collaborators and Jew-haters in the war against Russia. They are enraged by Putin and Xi, while in the Middle East they throw themselves at dictators and mass murderers like Saudi prince Mohammed bin Salman and the butcher of Cairo, Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi.

Disgust and revulsion at these policies and the opposition to them are growing. But it is necessary to consciously draw the lessons from the bankruptcy of the Greens. Pressure on the government and the ruling class cannot stop the danger of a third world war. What is needed is the building of an independent anti-war movement based on the international working class and linking the struggle against war, social inequality and fascism with the struggle against their cause, capitalism. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is fighting for in the European elections.



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