

Coalition talks begin in Germany: Rearming like the Nazis, anti-refugee agitation and social cuts

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Coalition negotiations between the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) to form a new federal government under the leadership of CDU chairman and former Blackrock banker Friedrich Merz officially began Thursday. The earlier exploratory talks already left no doubt that this will be the most right-wing German government since the fall of the Third Reich. It will not only rearm like the Nazis, but will also organise massive social attacks, implement the refugee policy of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) and establish a police state.

A paper published at the weekend summarising the “Results of the exploratory talks between the CDU, CSU and SPD” provides an impression of what is in store for workers and young people. Right at the beginning, the document states:

Our goal is to strengthen Germany’s internal and external defence capability, to invest massively in our infrastructure and to lay the foundations for lasting and sustained growth. We want to assume responsibility in Europe and, together with our partners, strengthen the defence capability and competitiveness of the European Union. One thing is clear: Germany will continue to stand by Ukraine.

This is the language of German imperialism in the 21st century—but the thrust, goals and methods are the old ones. Eighty years after the end of the Second World War, the ruling class is once again concerned with nothing less than: (1) the militarisation and preparation of the entire society for war, and (2) the organisation of Europe under German leadership—aimed at asserting itself in the growing conflict with the other major powers, above all the US under Trump, and escalating the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

To this end, the CDU/CSU and SPD are planning an arms spending programme that can only be compared to the dimensions of Germany’s rearmament prior to the First and Second World Wars. According to the exploratory paper, all

defence spending above 1 percent of GDP is not to be counted towards the constitutionally enshrined debt brake, which restricts the annual structural deficit of the federal government to 0.35 percent of GDP. In other words, military spending can increase indefinitely. A figure of €500 billion is directly under discussion.

In addition, the paper leaves no doubt that the “special fund” for infrastructure at federal/state/municipal level planned by the CDU/CSU and SPD also essentially serves to prepare for war. In particular, it includes civil defence and civil protection, transport infrastructure, hospital investments, investments in energy infrastructure as well as in education, care and science infrastructure, research, development and digitalisation.

Even if no one in the prospective government is saying it openly, this is about the implementation of “Operation Plan Germany” (OPLAN DEU). This classified document, which is over a thousand pages long, is constantly updated and its core elements are currently being presented at federal, state and local level. It is an operational war plan that defines which and how military and civilian elements must work together in the event of war, and how the infrastructure required to maintain war capability is to be established.

According to its own statements, the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) is “dependent on help from civil society and civilian industry in the event of crisis and defence.” The challenges here “cannot be met purely by the military, they must be mastered by the state and society as a whole.” For this reason, “maximum civilian support ... is a decisive factor” in OPLAN DEU and “civil-military interaction for mutual support of the entire state” is a “core element.” Above all, the operational plan provides for the involvement of the logistics and energy sectors, as, according to the Bundeswehr, “reliable, flexible transport and a reliable energy supply are indispensable for the fulfilment of the armed forces’ tasks.” Hospitals also play a role in this, as do “science” and “research” geared towards war readiness (as SPD Defence Minister Boris Pistorius put it).

The ruling class is pushing for the greatest possible speed in the implementation of its rearmament and war plans. “The funds from the Bundeswehr special fund must flow out

quickly,” the exploratory paper states. The CDU/CSU and SPD therefore want to “present a planning and procurement acceleration law for the Bundeswehr in the first six months after forming the government, as well as a priority list of armaments to be procured quickly, which should increase our country’s defence readiness quickly and efficiently.”

A so-called “master plan to strengthen the Bundeswehr and Germany’s defence,” which the CSU published shortly before the elections, already provided an initial overview of these priorities. In addition to the “growth” of the Bundeswehr to “500,000 ready-to-use soldiers and reservists” and the “reintroduction of compulsory military service,” the paper calls for all combat units to be fully equipped, which requires:

- 300 additional battle tanks, 500 infantry fighting vehicles and 2,500 vehicles
- A drone army with 100,000 drones plus in-house development and production
- All branches of the armed forces must be able to deploy and defend against drones and AI
- First drone carrier in Europe for the German Navy to protect the North and Baltic Seas and European trade routes
- Iron Dome as a protective shield against missile and air attacks; 2,000 interceptor missiles for Patriot, IRIS-T and Arrow 3 for this purpose
- Deterrence through long-range conventional precision weapons: 1,000 new Taurus missiles (500 km range) and development of new cruise missiles with a range of 2,500 km
- “Offensive in cyberspace” and “space offensive” with military “Starlink” and its own launch pad

The historic level of rearmament will be accompanied by equally historic attacks on the working class. In the “Financing” section of the exploratory paper, it states that “savings will also be made as part of the budget discussions and, in addition, a gradual switch to target-and impact-oriented budget management” will be made. Even if the text pays lip service to “safeguarding pension levels,” for example, it is clear that at the end of the planned arms race there will be nothing left of the remaining social and democratic rights.

Conditions are to be created on the labour market that force workers to accept any job, however poorly paid—even in the arms industry. Among other things, the Bürgergeld system (for welfare payments) is to be “reorganised into a new basic income for jobseekers,” i.e., massively cut. In addition, “job placement hurdles are to be removed and obligations to co-operate and sanctions are to be tightened in line with the principle of facilitating and demanding.” And “people who are able to work and repeatedly refuse reasonable work” will be “completely deprived of benefits.”

In terms of refugee policy, the coalition partners-to-be have completely adopted the programme of the fascist AfD, with whom Merz had already made an open pact a few weeks before the election. A “repatriation offensive will be launched,” the CDU/CSU and SPD threaten in the paper. They are working on

“comprehensive legal regulations to increase the number of returns” and will also turn back asylum seekers “at national borders.” The federal police should “be given the authority to apply for temporary detention or custody to ensure the deportation of foreigners who are obliged to leave the country.” All possibilities will be exhausted “to significantly increase the capacity for detention pending deportation.”

During the election campaign, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, Socialist Equality Party) had already stated that the anti-refugee agitation and the associated strengthening of the fascists serves two central goals: dividing the working class and establishing a police state in order to rearm Germany as the leading military power after two lost world wars—and to suppress any resistance to this.

The plans of the CDU/CSU and SPD are essentially supported by all parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament). The Greens are already in talks to secure the putative grand coalition the necessary two-thirds majority in the outgoing parliament in order to get the plans off the ground quickly. Their criticism comes from the right: they are calling for rearmament to be financed even more directly through cuts and for additional areas such as the secret services to be excluded from the debt brake.

The Left Party also leaves no doubt that it is ready for talks, especially if the current efforts to organise a majority in the outgoing Bundestag fail. “A new government needs a two-thirds majority for a constitutional amendment such as the reform of the debt brake or for special funds. It will not be able to avoid the Left Party,” wrote the party’s co-chair Ines Schwerdtner on X shortly after the election. Other leading Left Party representatives expressed similar views, as did a resolution passed by the party executive on March 1, which explicitly called for the debt brake to be lifted “in order to free up sufficient funds for financial civilian support for Ukraine.”

The support of all Bundestag parties and the trade unions for the policy of war shows that the struggle against fascism, militarism and social inequality requires a political break with bourgeois-capitalist politics as a whole and the building of an independent working class movement on a socialist basis. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei is fighting for this and calls on all workers and young people to react to the war plans with the necessary political clarity and seriousness and to join the SGP.



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