

German parliament agrees to massive military spending, with the votes of the Left Party

Johannes Stern
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Both houses of the German parliament passed legislation last week enabling the incoming government to take out more than 1 trillion euros in new loans. With this, the ruling class is launching a rearmament programme that can only be compared with Germany's arms buildup in the years before the First and Second World Wars.

The amendment to the constitution adopted, now exempts all defence spending above 1 percent of GDP from the "debt brake," which sets strict limits on new borrowings. This means that military spending can be increased without limit. The immediate military spending target is €500 billion. Despite official propaganda, the "special federal/state/local infrastructure fund," drawn up by the parties of the incoming grand coalition, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD), and supported by the Greens, also serves to prepare for war.

The historic rearmament package shows how openly and aggressively the ruling class is returning to its old militaristic traditions. Eighty years after the end of the Second World War, it is once again seeking to militarise the whole of society in order to make Germany "fit for war" (in the words of outgoing SPD Defence Minister Boris Pistorius) and organise Europe under German leadership. In doing so, it is pursuing the goal of asserting itself in the intensifying conflict with the other major powers, above all, the US under Trump, and establishing Germany as an independent military power, as well as escalating the war offensive against Russia.

Above all, this development exposes the class character and political orientation of the nominally "left" parties. While the SPD and the Greens are to a certain extent the architects of the rearmament package, *Die Linke* (Left Party) also voted in favour of the massive military spending in the Bundesrat, the upper house of parliament. Although their votes did not even matter, both federal states, in which the Left Party governs in coalition with the SPD and the Greens (Bremen) and with the SPD (Mecklenburg-Western

Pomerania), voted in favour of the gigantic rearmament spending.

The Left Party could not make its role as the party of German capitalism and imperialism any clearer. On the evening of the election, Left Party leader Jan van Aken had already stressed that his party was "ready to talk" in order to work together with the right-wing Chancellor-to-be Friedrich Merz (CDU) and his intended grand coalition with the SPD, regarding their legislative projects. Other party representatives expressed similar views, making clear from the outset that they support the rearmament plans despite some of the criticism they have voiced.

Heidi Reichinnek, the Left Party's lead candidate in the February general election, made this particularly clear in an interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk a few days before the vote in the Bundesrat. Reichinnek left no doubt that the Left Party also supported the relaxation of the debt brake, primarily because it created the possibility of rearming the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). "If we reform the debt brake, there will of course be room for manoeuvre for all areas of the budget. And of course, we also say quite clearly that the Bundeswehr must be equipped accordingly as a defence force."

At the same time, she emphasised that the Left Party was merely rejecting giving a "blank cheque" for rearmament (which it nevertheless then issued in the Bundesrat). This concealed her original goal of being directly involved in the concrete plans in a vote in the incoming Bundestag, where the CDU/CSU and SPD do not possess the required majority to pass constitutional amendments, not to stop rearmament but to organise it as effectively as possible.

"Why don't we calmly discuss what the Bundeswehr needs in order to then initiate the corresponding budget decisions?" said Reichinnek, stressing: "That's our offer." It was "always a bit of a straw man that is set up, that we are not prepared to support the Bundeswehr. That's simply not true," she complained.

When asked by Deutschlandfunk whether she would “definitely be on board” with “improving Germany’s defence capabilities,” Reichinnek replied: “We have never rejected the idea of setting up the Bundeswehr as a defence force.” She also said that she “didn’t always know exactly where this idea came from. But what we are saying quite clearly is that we don’t want excessive rearmament. And if we were to reform the debt brake, I say again, there would be room for manoeuvre in the budget for all areas. We are ready for that.”

With regard to the “special fund“ of 100 billion euros for the Bundeswehr already agreed in 2022, she asked:

What happened to it? And how can it be that so much money has already been invested, and we are somehow still not really one step ahead? So, what about consultancy contracts that lead to the purchase of radio equipment that doesn’t fit into tanks, the purchase of rifles that shoot to the left or right, so that we are simply wasting billions?

We needed to talk about these points now, and then “see where the need is to set up the Bundeswehr sensibly,” she said. In doing so, one could “take an example from Finland” where they do “something similar,” and “of course, we know that investments are necessary.”

Reichinnek’s reference to Finland alone says it all. Since the country joined NATO in 2023 and became a frontline state in the NATO war offensive against Russia, the Finnish military budget has more than doubled from \$3.83 billion (2021) to \$7.35 billion (2023). It is expected to grow to over \$11.5 billion in the coming years. With a population of 5.5 million, Finland is 15 times smaller than Germany.

To put it bluntly: In reality, the Left Party agrees with “excessive rearmament” and has supported it in the Bundesrat for this very reason. The same applies to all other “areas” that are the focus of German war policy. On March 1, for example, the party executive demanded “a debt cut for Ukraine” and “a lifting of the debt brake” in order to “free up” sufficient funds to support Kiev.

The Left Party also explicitly supports Israel’s genocide in Gaza, which has already cost tens of thousands of lives and is ultimately aimed at the imperialist recolonisation of the entire Middle East. Reichinnek herself declared in a speech in the Bundestag on March 21, 2024 that Hamas “are not freedom fighters, but terrorists who must be disarmed. We must all agree on that here.” Israel “naturally has the right to defend itself.”

What lies behind the militarism of the Left Party, which is

now taking on ever more open and repulsive forms?

The reason lies “not only in its right-wing leaders, but in the political and social orientation and history of the party as a whole,” reads a WSWs analysis of the reactionary role of the Left Party.

Despite its name, the Left Party has never been a socialist or even left-wing party. It has always been a bourgeois organisation representing the interests of the state apparatus and a wealthy upper middle class strata, defending German capitalism and imperialism and being rewarded for this with ministerial posts and state subsidies running into the millions.

All the verbiage of the Left Party cannot hide the fact that 1) its Stalinist predecessors, the SED/PDS, supported the introduction of capitalism in East Germany and thus also the prerequisite for the return of German militarism. And that 2) wherever it has governed or is governing at the state level together with the SPD and Greens, it is also aggressively pushing through associated social attacks.

In Bremen, for example, the Left Party Health Senator (state minister) Claudia Bernhard, who justified her approval of the rearmament package citing her “responsibility for the federal state of Bremen,” is playing a key role in implementing the “hospital reforms” of Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (SPD), i.e., closing them down. It is clear that at the end of the orgy of rearmament that has now been decided, nothing will be left of the remaining social and democratic rights.

Young people, in particular, who voted for the Left Party in the February Bundestag elections to send a signal against militarism and fascism, must face reality. Not only is *Die Linke* not a party that fights against these evils; it is a party that actively promotes rearmament and war and the associated social cuts and enforces them against growing resistance. That is the lesson to be learned from its vote approving the war credits on March 21, 2025.



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