

Berlin promises Kiev billions more and deploys combat troops in Lithuania

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After the federal election and the approval of the largest war credits since the Nazis, Germany's ruling class is systematically pursuing its war offensive. This centres on military expansion to the east and war preparations against the nuclear power, Russia.

On Tuesday, acting Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) travelled to Kiev. There she assured the Ukrainian regime, which is riddled with right-wing extremists, of further German and European support for the NATO war against Russia.

While deceitfully claiming that Kiev was “ready for a ceasefire without preconditions,” she declared threateningly: “Putin, on the other hand, is playing for time and continuing his war of aggression in violation of international law. Putin cannot be trusted in this situation.” Under these conditions, she said, there could be no “lifting of sanctions.”

Coming from Baerbock, any references to “international law,” “democracy” or “human rights” are hypocritical provocations. She is one of the most aggressive supporters of Israel's genocide against the Palestinians and openly justifies Israeli strikes against civilian sites that regularly kill hundreds of civilians, including many women and children.

Just a few days ago, Baerbock paid another visit to the Syrian HTS regime and its leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani (real name Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa) and promised him a further €300 million in support. She delivered the “hospitality gift” shortly after al-Jolani's militias, which are close to al-Qaeda, had slaughtered more than a thousand members of the Alawite minority in pogrom-like massacres.

Baerbock's propaganda about “international law” also rings completely hollow with regard to Russia. In fact, the Western imperialist powers are the main aggressors in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, not Moscow. With the systematic military encirclement of Russia, the NATO powers deliberately provoked the reactionary invasion by the Putin regime on February 24, 2022. Since then, they have continued to escalate the conflict. Above all, Germany and the EU are responding to the direct negotiations between President Donald Trump and Putin with a further escalation of the war.

In an official Foreign Ministry post on X, Baerbock announced: “Thanks to the reform of the debt brake, we can

continue to support the Ukrainian military in the next few years and expand our European security architecture. We want to use this to reach more than 3 percent of GDP for our defence capability in the next few years.”

In other words, the largest German rearmament package since the Nazi era is directly serving to escalate the war against Russia. The amendment to the constitution, which was supported by the Greens and the Left Party, exempts all defence spending above 1 percent of GDP from the strict limits imposed by the debt brake and allows it to rise without constraint. The 3 percent brought into play by Baerbock is therefore just a start.

After the meeting in Kiev, Ukrainian President and de facto dictator Volodymyr Zelensky expressed his gratitude for Baerbock's support, writing that Germany was “leading in Europe in terms of the scope of aid to Ukraine—from financial support and weapons to strengthening our air defence.” This includes six IRIS-T systems, three Patriot systems and Gepard anti-aircraft guns. He was “grateful to the Bundestag [parliament] for the decision to provide Ukraine with a further 3 billion euros.” This meant that “German support this year will amount to 7 billion euros.”

Regarding the incoming German government, a grand coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Social Democrats (SPD), Zelensky said he was “hopeful” it would also supply the infamous Taurus cruise missiles to Kyiv. “We will work on it,” he replied when asked whether he expected Chancellor-designate Friedrich Merz (CDU), to decide quickly when he took office. He said talks were already underway, but that he did not want to comment on details before Merz became chancellor.

At the beginning of the election campaign, Merz had already spoken out in favour of the delivery of Taurus cruise missiles and thus in favour of a massive escalation of the war offensive against Russia. The Taurus has a range of over 500 kilometres and can attack targets deep inside Russia, including the capital Moscow.

On the same day that Baerbock visited Kiev, the planned German combat brigade in Lithuania was formally put into service. According to a press release from the German Army, the unit was “transitioning to the regular brigade staff with a military roll-out at the duty station in Vilnius.” This meant that

the new Panzerbrigade 45 “has been officially established as a major military unit of the German Army.”

In addition, the brigade’s medical centre in Rokantiskés and a staff support and communications company in Nemenciné have been set up. Now the German units are to grow quickly.

According to the army, “around 500 members of the brigade will be serving in Lithuania” by the end of the year. Then “more and more troops will gradually be relocated from Germany until the target size of 4,800 soldiers and 200 civilian employees is reached.”

The army’s press release leaves no doubt that the first deployment of German combat troops to Eastern Europe since the end of World War II is part of a comprehensive preparation for war against Russia. In the summer of 2023, Defence Minister Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD) had decided “to permanently station a German combat brigade in Lithuania,” it states. This meant that “Germany is taking responsibility within NATO.”

“Beyond the brigade in Lithuania,” the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) will be “visible in numerous exercises in Lithuania this year.” For example, the “Rapid Forces Division” will take part in the “Griffin Lightning” exercise in May with around 700 soldiers and in the “Swift Response” exercise with up to 500 soldiers. In addition, the 37th Armoured Brigade “Freistaat Sachsen” will participate in the “Grand Eagle II” exercise with up to 1,000 soldiers in September.

Eighty years after the fall of the Third Reich and the most horrific crimes in human history—the Holocaust of 6 million Jews and Hitler’s war of annihilation against the Soviet Union—nothing less than the complete unleashing of German militarism, including nuclear armament, is on the agenda once again. In particular, the warmongers in the media leave no doubt about this.

A commentary in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) rants against the “fetters of the Two Plus Four Treaty,” i.e., the accord signed in Moscow on September 12, 1990, between the governments of West and East Germany, as well as France, the Soviet Union, Britain and the US, which was long regarded as the final peace settlement of the Second World War.

The treaty limited “Germany’s options if it has to defend itself against Russia,” explains the FAZ. German war propagandists always talk about defence when they mean attack, and the author of the quoted commentary, Rainer Müller, makes no secret of his revanchist mindset.

It was only with the Two Plus Four Agreement that Germany gained “the unification of the Federal Republic [West Germany] and the GDR [East Germany] and state sovereignty, which many no longer thought possible, but at a price that went beyond the eastern territories,” he complains. “Germany agreed to renounce nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and to a ceiling on its armed forces of 370,000 soldiers.”

The message is clear: to build up a nuclear war force armed to the teeth—Müller brings up the figure of 500,000 soldiers—the

treaty must be broken if necessary. In contrast to Trump and Putin, Germany liked to act “as a paragon of international law,” but “must not go under in the process,” warns the FAZ.

The other establishment media are also in war mode. The cover of the current issue of Germany’s leading news weekly *Der Spiegel* shows chancellor-to-be Merz and President of the European Commission and former Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (both CDU) in Bundeswehr uniforms in front of a camouflage background. Below them is the question “War-ready?” The cover story concludes that even the war credits that have just been set in motion are not enough to make Germany truly “fit for war.”

The authors complain:

The weak points are enormous: when it comes to missiles, air defence, cyber defence and satellites, Europe is largely defenceless. For decades, virtually everything was neglected or overlooked or left to the Americans. Suddenly, a trillion euros for new defence spending doesn’t sound like such a lot: each new Leopard tank costs around 25 million euros, each Eurofighter around 140 million.

And even if there was a lot of money, it took people to build, programme and operate the weapons systems.

In another essay in the same issue, editor Lothar Gorris asks: “Are we willing to send our children to war?” The former anti-NATO and anti-nuclear demonstrator answers the question unequivocally with “Yes.” In doing so, he speaks for an entire affluent upper middle-class milieu that was formerly pacifist but is now willing to step over the corpses of its own children to further the predatory interests of German imperialism. Gorris cynically calls this a “personal turning point.”

At the same time, he admits that his 18-year-old son was not exactly enthusiastic in response to his question “whether he had ever thought about [joining] the Bundeswehr.”

There is enormous opposition to militarism and war among the population and especially among young people. To confront this madness, they must turn to a socialist perspective and orient themselves towards the international working class. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and its youth and student organisation the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) are fighting for.



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