

Oppose European rearmament!

Alex Lantier
26 May 2025

European countries are collectively plunging hundreds of billions of euros into a mad frenzy of military spending. The massive diversion of resources from social programs and jobs into the war machine is setting the European imperialist powers on a collision course with the working class.

On Sunday, German armed forces commander Carsten Breuer ordered the German military to be fully equipped with modern equipment by 2029. Funds from Berlin's €1 trillion rearmament fund are to go to drone warfare, long-range missiles and space warfare capabilities. Yesterday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz made clear how such funds will be used, announcing a new military escalation targeting Russia that threatens the outbreak of total war in Europe.

Implying that Berlin would now give Ukraine long-range missiles like its Taurus cruise missile for strikes across Russia, Merz said:

There are no longer any limits on the range of weapons delivered to Ukraine—not for the British, the French, or for us. Or for the Americans, either.

Merz pledged that missiles from Germany and its NATO allies would be fired “against military installations on Russian soil.” This poses the risk that Russian missiles could be fired on targets in Germany, unleashing an uncontrollable escalatory spiral.

German policy is, however, only the most ruthless expression of a war fever seizing the entire European bourgeoisie. From 2014 to 2024, European yearly military spending more than doubled from €147 to €326 billion, rising by over one-third just since 2022. Germany's military spending rose 28 percent in 2024 to reach \$88.5 billion, and Poland's grew 31 percent to reach \$38 billion, while France has pledged to nearly double its military spending to €100 billion by 2030.

Rearmament continues largely behind the backs of

Europe's population, without any explanation being given to the public of its costs or goals. Last week, the European Union (EU) activated the Security Action For Europe (SAFE) program, a part of its €800 billion rearmament plan agreed in March that provides EU states and Britain €150 billion in loans for joint European defense projects. While this decision went largely unreported, it means that European states will ultimately have to repay €150 billion, either by raising taxes or slashing social programs.

The European imperialist powers' response to Trump's coming to power this year is an explosion of militarism on a scale unseen since the Nazis ruled over Europe. As Trump threatened to end military aid to Ukraine and suspend US security guarantees to Europe, they sought to develop the ability to independently wage large-scale wars around Europe—even against nuclear-armed Russia.

Washington and its European NATO “allies” are rivals in the bitter struggle over markets and strategic advantage unfolding between the world powers. After Trump tried to cut Europe out of talks over Ukraine and demanded Ukraine give Washington \$500 billion in rare earth minerals, Britain and the EU advanced competing plans to loot Ukrainian minerals. EU Commissioner Stéphane Séjourné called for a “win-win partnership” where Ukraine would provide “21 of the 30 critical materials Europe needs.”

Europe's rearmament is not defending democracy against Russia or Trump, but taking on an ever more overtly aggressive, fascistic character. Layers of the European ruling class are dispensing with the political fiction that they are not involved in a global war between the major powers, or that they reject the resort to genocide as a tool in the pursuit of their economic and military interests.

On Sunday, UK Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch brazenly defended the Israeli genocide in Gaza on Sky News as supposedly beneficial to Britain, since it targets Iran and Hamas. She continued:

Israel is fighting a proxy war on behalf of the UK, just like Ukraine is on behalf of Western Europe against Russia.

The genocide in Gaza, like the social cuts now prepared to fund European rearmament, has provoked profound anger among workers. Explosive class struggles are on the agenda. However, to stop the plunge into a third world war, a decisive political reckoning must be made with the reactionary maneuvers of middle class pseudo-left parties and their allied union bureaucracies inside each European country.

These forces, descended from Stalinism and petty-bourgeois renegades from Trotskyism, play a key role both in waging war and blocking working class opposition. While Germany's Left Party gave key votes in parliament to put the warmonger Merz in office, France's New Popular Front led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon inscribed in its election program last year Macron's plan to send French troops as "peacekeepers" to Ukraine. As for Spain's Podemos (now Sumar) party, it sat in governments that are adopting Spain's largest military budgets in history.

Moreover, these parties and their allies work to tie protests against the Gaza genocide and austerity in Europe to the bankrupt perspective of appealing to imperialist governments to change policy.

The rottenness of this perspective was illustrated by their role in the mass European strike movement two years ago. As millions of workers struck against inflation and austerity in Germany, Britain, France, Turkey and across Europe, the European sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) issued a statement on the emerging movement. Titled "The mass strike movement, war and the revolutionary crisis in Europe," it explained:

What is unfolding is not a series of national trade union struggles that can be resolved by isolated negotiations with one or other capitalist government. Rather, it is an international political struggle, as workers raise similar demands in every country and are met with police crackdowns and legal threats from governments that are discredited and widely despised. . .

What is emerging across Europe is an objectively revolutionary situation. The

alternatives are as starkly posed as they were at the outbreak of World War I, over a century ago. Either the capitalist class plunges Europe and the world into a global war between nuclear-armed states, or the working class takes power out of the hands of the warmongering ruling elites.

The strikes were, however, uniformly sold out or politically strangled. Nowhere was this more blatant than in the mass strikes in France against unpopular pension cuts to fund increased military spending.

Millions of workers went on strike, and riots erupted nationwide in France's greatest political crisis since the May 1968 general strike. Yet Mélenchon avoided any call for a political struggle to bring down Macron, and the union bureaucracies summarily ended strikes and protests after the cuts were promulgated in violation of overwhelming popular opposition. They thus set the stage for the record increases in military spending in France and across Europe in the last two years.

Similar movements are on the agenda today, as European imperialism mounts an even more gargantuan rearmament drive. But lessons must be drawn. The grip of pseudo-left forces over the class struggle must be broken. This means firstly building rank-and-file committees of action among workers and youth, to coordinate class struggles internationally, independently of the sabotage by the bureaucracy, and build a broader, continuing mobilization against genocide, fascism and war.

Above all, it means building a political movement to saturate workers and youth with consciousness that such a struggle ultimately requires transferring power to the working class in a world socialist revolution. The lifeblood of such a movement is the ICFI's irreconcilable opposition to Stalinism and all forms of national opportunism and the unbroken continuity of its defense of Trotskyism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact