

€377 billion for weapons—Germany’s most extensive rearmament programme since Hitler

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Speaking to the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* over the weekend, Chancellor Friedrich Merz (Christian Democratic Union—CDU) once again confirmed his goal that Germany should build “the strongest conventional army in Europe.” A few days later, Politico published a Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) procurement list showing what this means in concrete terms: rearmament on a historic scale, surpassing anything seen since Hitler.

According to the list—also reported on by *Die Welt*—the planned spending across land, air, sea, space and cyber domains total €377 billion [\$US436 billion]. This colossal rearmament programme includes hundreds of projects, from new tanks and artillery systems to drones, fighter jets, space satellites and cruise missiles.

At its core is the creation of an army capable of waging war against Russia. The Bundeswehr plans to acquire 400 Tomahawk cruise missiles with a range of over 2,000 kilometres. These missiles can reach deep into the Russian heartland—the distance from Berlin to Moscow is around 1,600 kilometres. Germany is thus preparing for offensive operations that would form part of a devastating Third World War.

This madness is being financed through a massive increase in military spending. The Merz government—a coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats (SPD), with the support of the Left Party and the Greens—has permanently exempted rearmament from the constitutionally enshrined debt brake, thereby freeing up war credits totalling one trillion euros. While billions flow into weapons, ammunition and satellite systems, social budgets are being frozen, *Bürgergeld* (basic welfare support) abolished, and pensions and

health spending cut. The working class is to bear the cost—as cannon fodder at the front and through social devastation at home.

The main profiteers of this new German war economy are the same corporations that armed Hitler’s military (Wehrmacht) during the Second World War.

According to *Die Welt*, Rheinmetall is the biggest winner of the €377 billion plan. The company appears in 53 project entries worth over €88 billion, with another €56 billion flowing to subsidiaries and joint ventures. By 2035, almost 700 new Puma infantry fighting vehicles are to be delivered, along with hundreds of Skyranger systems for drone defence.

Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger boasted openly in a recent interview with finance daily *Handelsblatt* about the company’s profit outlook: the order backlog already stands at €65 billion and could rise to €120 billion by mid-next year. Revenue is expected to grow to between €40 and €50 billion by 2030—with a profit margin of 20 percent.

Other major beneficiaries include Diehl Defence, manufacturer of the Iris-T missile family, and Hensoldt, which according to broadcaster n-tv is “swimming in orders.” These war profits reflect an expanding armaments bubble that is growing alongside the rearmament drive and forging an ever-closer integration of the state, military and big business.

The creation of a war economy is not limited to Germany. German imperialism is building a network of military-industrial outposts across Europe.

On October 28, Rheinmetall announced the founding of a joint venture with Bulgaria. The facility in question, scheduled for completion within 14 months, will produce gunpowder and 155-millimetre artillery

shells worth over €1 billion. “Bulgaria is moving faster than ever before,” Papperger boasted, adding that the company was creating “one of the best factories in Europe.”

Further east, German arms manufacturers are expanding directly into Ukraine itself. As *Handelsblatt* reports, new production and development sites for German companies are being established there. “Customer and supplier are becoming partners,” the paper writes. CDU Economics Minister Katherina Reiche declared during a recent visit to Kyiv: “Ukraine is no longer merely a recipient of aid. There is huge potential here for cooperation, synergies and growth.”

Eighty years after the war of extermination against the Soviet Union, German imperialism is once again systematically organising war in the East—this time under the pretext of “defending democracy”—while pursuing the same imperialist objectives: domination of the continent, control over Ukraine and all Eastern Europe and ultimately the subjugation of Russia.

To build the “strongest army in Europe” and enforce these aims by force, the government plans a military restructuring of the entire country.

Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) announced plans to build barracks “on an assembly line.” On Monday, the Defence Ministry declared that 187 previously decommissioned sites would be returned to military use, with another 13 locations—including the former Berlin-Tegel airport—to be retained rather than released for civilian use.

While tank depots, munitions factories and satellite centres are being built, civilian life is being destroyed. Education, healthcare and social infrastructure are being undermined to free up financial and human resources for war. At the top of the federal government’s agenda are the reintroduction of conscription and the militarisation of universities and schools.

At the start of the week, Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt (Christian Social Union—CSU) told *Handelsblatt* that schools should be preparing young people for possible wartime conditions. At the upcoming Conference of Interior Ministers in November, he intends to propose that “crisis preparedness” be integrated into the school day—for example through specially designed double lessons.

Behind the militarisation of Germany and Europe lie

objective driving forces. As in the 1930s, under the pressure of world crisis and imperialist rivalries, all social resources are being mobilised for war. The ruling class is responding to growing international tensions and internal social conflicts with authoritarian and militarist measures.

But the war policy is meeting growing resistance. Millions of workers reject this imperialist madness. The decisive task is to give this resistance conscious political form—independent of all capitalist parties and trade unions that support the war drive.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) calls for the international mobilisation of the working class to prevent the impending catastrophe. The fight against war is inseparable from the fight against capitalism itself.

Only through building a socialist movement that fights for the expropriation of the arms corporations, the dissolution of NATO, and the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe can the road to a third world war be stopped.



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