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## *No to European rearmament!*



German soldiers load tank howitzers for transport to Lithuania at the Bundeswehr army base in Munster, northern Germany, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022. [AP Photo/Martin Meissner]

Every major European power is accelerating a frantic programme of military rearmament. €800 billion is being made available by the European Union. Germany has announced hundreds of additional billions in defence spending, even before the new CDU-led government of Friedrich Merz takes office.

France is planning to double annual military spending, with President Macron proposing a goal of 5 percent of GDP. He has declared his readiness to bring European allies under France's nuclear umbrella.

Britain, led by Keir Starmer's Labour government, is proposing to put British "boots on the ground and planes in the air" in Ukraine, as part of a "coalition of the willing" in alliance with France and other powers.

Every political party and major news outlet is spewing forth lies justifying this explosion of militarism, claiming a moral imperative of defending Ukrainian democracy and the entire continent from Russian aggression and, more absurdly still, invasion.

In a televised address to the nation, Macron declared that “peace can no longer be guaranteed on our own continent. ... Russia has become and will remain a threat to France and Europe.”

The real motivation for the European powers is their realisation that Trump’s America First foreign policy, his unilateral discussions with Russia and demands for exclusive access to Ukraine’s resources threaten to cut them off from the spoils of NATO’s war.

The conflict in Ukraine was prepared by a joint European-American campaign of destabilisation, aimed at bringing the country into the clutches of NATO and the European Union and spearheading regime change in Moscow that would open Russia’s substantial assets to world imperialism.

As the representative of Russia’s capitalist oligarchy, Putin’s government was unable to respond to this threat in any other way than the reactionary invasion of Ukraine, just as the NATO powers anticipated.

Had Trump agreed to preserve Europe’s interests in his discussions with Putin, Berlin, Paris and London would have sought an accommodation with Washington, as demonstrated by the constant overtures to the fascist in the White House by Starmer and Macron.

Amid the tidal wave of hypocrisy unleashed to justify rearmament, Europe is desperately seeking a revival of the July 2021 “Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and Ukraine on a Strategic Partnership on Raw Materials,” as the basis for their continued support for Zelensky’s right-wing regime.

This memorandum was described last month by Europe’s Commissioner for Industrial Strategy Stéphane Séjourné as providing “twenty-one of the 30 critical materials Europe needs” as part of a “win-win partnership.” Indeed, Europe is far more dependent on seizing Ukraine’s strategic minerals than the United States, and at this point relies almost exclusively on China for its supply.

Acknowledging these real interests, a “diplomat from a major European country,” speaking anonymously to the BBC, said of Trump’s ending military aid to Ukraine, “It’s certainly one way of focusing our minds—and wallets! Donald Trump is doing us a favour, if we choose to think about it that way.”

The dangers raised for the European and international working class are incalculable. Placing European troops on the ground and planes in the air over Ukraine, and even extending a

French nuclear umbrella to Germany and other allies, are the real source of the war danger in Europe.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said of Macron's sabre-rattling, "If he considers us a threat, convenes a meeting of the chiefs of general staff of European countries and Britain, says it is necessary to use nuclear weapons, prepares to use nuclear weapons against Russia, this is, of course, a threat."

When the European powers speak of the end of the "international rules-based order," and blame Trump for this, they are preparing for a return to the pursuit of their own imperialist interests by force of arms. They are now fully aware that doing so involves conflict not only with Russia, but with American imperialism.

Germany, which is leading the way in the rearmament drive, fought two wars in the 20th century against the US. France never accepted its subordination to Washington through NATO, including insisting on an independent nuclear capability and military intelligence structures. Britain chafed against it. Significant sections of the ruling elite have never forgiven America for ensuring their subordination to its dictates following the 1956 Suez crisis.

The scale of Europe's ambitions is made clear by the vast sums being prepared for military purposes, which go far beyond what is required for claimed efforts to police an eventual peace settlement in Ukraine. War with Russia under Europe's own steam is under discussion. Moreover, whereas this agenda provides an initial unifying impulse, its pursuit must inevitably intensify competition and conflicts between the European powers themselves.

The burning question before millions of workers and young people is how to stop this mad drive to catastrophe. There is no basis for doing so by relying on any of Europe's opposition parties, either on the right or nominal left, or the trade unions.

Just as in the United States, where the Democratic Party's sole substantial disagreement with Trump is over continuing the proxy war in Ukraine and his undermining of NATO, every major party in Europe supports stepped-up aggression against Russia and the push for military independence from the United States. It is pursued as a strategic goal whether under Starmer's Labour Party, President Macron, or whatever coalition government emerges in Germany.

The sole concern of Europe's trade unions is how best to support their own ruling class in Europe's escalating trade and military war, including backing protectionist measures against the US and China and the rapid expansion of national defence industries.

Workers and young people must respond with their own call to arms, committing themselves to waging war against war.

That must be based on an understanding of the vast implications of what is underway. All of the claims that war in Europe was a thing of the past, relegated to the 20th century, have been exposed as a fraud. European militarism, presented as an extinct volcano, is once again erupting, posing the threat of catastrophes even greater than those that claimed tens of millions of lives in the two world wars.

The program of war is entirely incompatible with even nominally democratic forms of rule. The ruling elites are once again turning to a program of fascism and dictatorship to enforce militarist policies that are opposed by the vast mass of the population.

The vast sums dedicated to weapons of war mean an assault on the working class deeper than at any time in the past 80 years. Under conditions where strikes, industrial actions and protests are already growing, this will provoke massive struggles by the working class.

The struggle against austerity must be fused with the fight against war. Both can only be taken forward through a frontal assault on the ruling oligarchy, whose rapacious interests dictate the program of war abroad and class war at home.

For decades, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has sounded the alarm, warning that a new period of imperialist war is underway. Those warnings have been fully vindicated. They must be acted upon. That means building a unified movement of the working class throughout Europe and internationally, based on the socialist and revolutionary programme that is the only way to stop war and its source, capitalism itself.

*8 March 2025*