

Editor of Germany's *Die Zeit* newspaper demands rearmament and war

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For Josef Joffe, the editor of the weekly liberal magazine *Die Zeit*, the multi-billion-euro rearmament plans of the German government do not go far enough. In his weekly column “zeitgeist,” Joffe complains, on behalf of a substantial lobby of war-mongering scribblers in the editorial offices of the bourgeois press, that the rearmament of the German army is not taking place more quickly.

Under the headline “Warriors in the Lists,” Joffe writes with barely concealed cynicism, “The stepchild of the nation is now to be jazzed up again, but only from featherweight to lightweight.” The “shopping list” of the defence minister is “cryptic,” a “work of art for vagueness,” and is composed of “elastic numbers right and left.”

The additional €130 billion in spending planned by the German government over the next 15 years provokes merely a tired yawn from Joffe. €80 billion had already been planned, and in addition, “Prior to reunification, the state spent 3 percent of GDP on defence and weaponry. Today it is less than 1.2 percent.” Further, regarding “what for?” the answer from the minister was “scanty.” “A strategy” was missing and an answer to “where, how and why.”

Instead of a “lightweight,” Joffe wants a “heavyweight” military. Gripped by war fever, he rattles off his wish list: “225 Leopard 2 [tanks] are to become 320. Prior to reunification, it was 5,000 fighting tanks.” Also absent were “combat helicopters to transport soldiers to the battlefield and provide them support.” “A correct increase” had only been ensured “with armoured vehicles.” But Joffe asked, “How will they get to the front beyond the German border, when the air and sea transport is missing? What will give them firepower, when the bomber fleet has been halved since the Cold War and is suffering under a lack of

flying activity?”

And where are the soldiers who will put this war machinery into action and die on the battlefield? “Taken together, West and East Germany had 600,000 men in uniform. Today it is not even 180,000,” Joffe complained. “How is an interventionist army to grow from this base?”

Joffe is disturbed most of all by the mass opposition to rearmament and war. Germany is a nation “where pacifism, in common parlance: ‘without me’ is the core belief.” Then he let rip, “Six out of ten Germans reject more foreign interventions. Air attacks on IS are supported by just a third, ground deployments by only one fifth. The (almost without risk) reconnaissance missions and refuelling of others are ok.”

He goes on, “What is the use of the best-equipped army, which cannot be achieved by an extra €5 billion per year, if the people in the democratic state, flanked by the commentariat, do not want to deploy it?”

Joffe urges the German government to impose the war drive on the population as quickly as possible. “The government does not have the 15 years in the defence minister’s timetable to conduct the bone-crunching task of convincing,” he stated, and added threateningly, “The peaceful years (approximately 1990 to 2010) are over, the threat is growing far more rapidly than the arms budget. [...] if the people’s minds cannot be changed, the finest arsenal will be worth nothing.”

Joffe comes from a Jewish background and he is no supporter of the Nazi dictatorship. But comments like his recall the crazed militarism of the German ruling elite during the Third Reich. In his first statements as German Chancellor, Hitler called for the German people to be “made fighting ready again.” In 1933, Hitler set up a “Reich defence committee,” whose task it was to “bring the mobilisation of the people and state

into line with the mobilisation of the army.”

Joffe’s commentary must be taken seriously by working people and youth and understood as a warning. With his numerous connections to the highest levels of politics and his membership in Transatlantic think tanks, he speaks on behalf of a ruling class, which, despite horrific crimes in two world wars, has once again lost its senses and is preparing to defend the interests of German imperialism and the capitalist elite by all means necessary.



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