

German government wants its own aircraft carrier

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The German ruling class dreams of building its own aircraft carrier. This was made clear by statements from leading government and opposition politicians last week.

At a press conference with the Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins in Berlin last Monday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) was asked what she thought of the “interesting proposal for a European aircraft carrier made by the leader of the Christian Democratic Union.” Merkel replied, “I think aircraft carriers are good ... It is only right and proper that Europe has such equipment. I am quite willing to cooperate.”

One day earlier the head of the CDU, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, responded to the European manifesto of French President Emmanuel Macron by raising the prospect of a joint Franco-German aircraft carrier. In a guest commentary for the *Welt am Sonntag*, she wrote: “Germany and France are already working together on the project of a future European fighter, other nations are invited to participate. As a next step, we could begin the symbolic project of building a joint European aircraft carrier to express the global role of the European Union as a force for security and peace.”

Workers and young people in Germany and throughout Europe must take this announcement as a serious warning. It is obvious that the construction of a German-European aircraft carrier is planned for war, not peace. Germany’s only aircraft carrier, the Graf Zeppelin, was launched on December 8, 1938. It was a project with great symbolic importance for Adolf Hitler during the process of rearming the German army (Wehrmacht) to fight World War II.

The current German grand coalition’s military and rearmament plans leave no doubt that the ruling class is preparing once again for large-scale warfare. The construction of a powerful navy plays a central role in the plans of German imperialism to assert its predatory interests worldwide—as was the case preceding the First

and Second World Wars.

According to the new policy doctrine of the German army presented last July by Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU), Germany “As a foreign trade and commodity-dependent nation is particularly reliant on unrestricted use of the sea.” Due to “Germany’s maritime dependence,” “the Bundeswehr has a special responsibility for the protection of its own coastal waters, the adjacent sea areas such as the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the waters of NATO’s northern flank area and international maritime lines.”

The doctrine then goes on to explain what this entails. Among other things, German naval forces would have to be able to “prove effective in three-dimensional naval warfare over the entire spectrum of intensive operations,” “plan and lead multinational operations at an upper tactical level and participate in naval warfare” “via their own A2/AD [Anti-Access Area-Denial] skills and ability to conduct operations against A2/AD-enabled agents” and “maintain tactical-offensive naval warfare and deny the enemy the ability to engage in offensive naval warfare.”

In other words, the call for an aircraft carrier is not simply the brainchild of Merkel, but rather the implementation of war plans which have been worked out behind the backs of the population. According to the current “capability profile of the Bundeswehr”—an internal planning document for the comprehensive modernisation of the Bundeswehr up to 2031—the navy, in the next few years, is to receive all necessary “capabilities” to conduct comprehensive naval warfare. According to media reports, the central issue is “recovery of the ability to conduct naval warfare from the air.”

The cost of these insane plans is to be carried by workers and youth in two ways: as cannon fodder on fresh battlefields and in the form of massive social cuts to free up the billions necessary for military rearmament. In their founding government pact the coalition of the

conservative Union parties (CDU/CSU, Christian Social Union) and the Social Democratic Party pledged to increase defence spending by 2024 to 2 percent of gross domestic product, i.e., more than €75 billion annually.

The purchase of an aircraft carrier would far exceed all previous rearmament plans. To give just one example, the construction costs of the USS Gerald Ford, which was commissioned by US President Donald Trump in July 2017, amount to \$13 billion. The total price of the ship and its F-35c fighter aircraft squadron then soars to about \$30 billion. Additional costs include operating expenses of around €13 million per month—during “peacetime.” These figures do not even include the costs for the crew of several thousand men.

Despite the monstrous nature of such a project, there has not been a word of opposition from the entire political and media establishment. On the contrary, five years after then President Joachim Gauck and the German government announced at the Munich Security Conference in 2014 that Germany must take on “more responsibility” in the world, the ruling class is increasingly making clear what this means.

According to a recent article on the pro-government think tank, the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), it is time to junk the “wishy washy term ‘responsibility,’” which “spreads a diffuse sense of comfort in the midst of global political turmoil.” In reality, it is all about “conflicting interests and the means of enforcing them.”

The SPD, which has long since played a leading role in Germany’s new aggressive foreign policy, is now attacking US imperialism from the right. During his brief visit to Afghanistan last week, German foreign minister Heiko Maas (SPD) attacked Trump’s announcement to withdraw US troops. One should not leave Afghanistan “too early,” Maas warned.

According to media reports, the German government is preparing to increase its own troop levels in this resource-rich and geo-strategically important country. The aim was to replace “capabilities provided by multinational partners which are critical for the mission,” according to a document cited in the German daily *Tagesspiegel*. To this end, “forces will be held ready in Germany” and an “increase in the mandate’s time limit will be examined on an individual case basis.”

Germany’s so-called leftist opposition parties also agree in principle with the grand coalition’s war and rearmament plans. According to the security spokesman for the Green Party, Tobias Lindner, the government

should “finally ensure that the Bundeswehr is once again operational.” His criticism of the planned aircraft carrier is limited to the fact that this project has not been preceded by “any serious debate on German defence policy or the capacity profile of the Bundeswehr.” A project “that would be far more realistic and not to be underestimated for the integration of European armed forces” is, in his opinion, “a joint training sailing ship”!

As for the Left Party, it has failed to make any comment on the government’s plans, and that comes as no surprise. A congress of the Left Party in Bonn at the end of February agreed a European election program with a large majority. The program is basically in alignment with German-European armament policy. In the run-up to the conference, the party executive had rejected any criticism of the European Union and a passage describing the EU as “militaristic, undemocratic and neoliberal” was deleted from the draft program. Since then, the leadership of the Left Party has even abandoned any verbal criticism of militarism.

The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) is the only party that has placed the return of German and European militarism at the heart of its European election campaign to arm the widespread opposition among workers and young people with a socialist program.

Its election statement declares: “In May 2019, the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) will run in the European elections with a nationwide electoral list to oppose the rise of the far right, growing militarism, the building of a police state and increasing social inequality. Together with the other sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), we are fighting for a socialist program to unify the European working class in struggle against capitalism. This is the only way to prevent the continent from relapsing into fascist barbarism and war.”



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