

German defence minister propagates rearmament, militarism and war

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Anyone wanting to understand the origins of the right-wing extremist networks in Germany's *Bundeswehr* (armed forces) and the security services and why they can operate largely unhindered should read the current interview with Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer in the German weekly magazine *Die Zeit*.

The minister and acting Christian Democratic Union (CDU) chairwoman beats the drum so aggressively for re-armament, militarism and war that one is inevitably reminded of Nazi policies.

It is "high time" to discuss "how Germany must position itself in the world in the future," she insists right at the outset of the interview. Germany is "expected to show leadership, not only as an economic power." It concerns "collective defence, it concerns international missions, it concerns a strategic view of the world, and ultimately it concerns the question of whether we want to actively shape the global order."

By this, Kramp-Karrenbauer means a massive rearmament offensive to advance the interests of German imperialism in a new period of war and great power conflicts. One could "clearly feel that 1989 was not the end of history." Instead, one encounters "conflicts between the USA and China, which confront us Europeans ever more abruptly with the question of what we are prepared to do for our values and our way of life."

Seventy-five years after the end of the Second World War and the Nazis' war of annihilation in the East, German imperialism is once again targeting Russia. "The claim of the current Russian leadership" to advocate their interests "very aggressively" must be "confronted with a clear position: We are well-fortified and in case of doubt, ready to defend ourselves. We see what Russia is doing and we will not let the Russian leadership get away with it."

In response to *Die Zeit* by "the *Bundeswehr* could do," Kramp-Karrenbauer threateningly answers, "As a NATO and EU [European Union] country in the middle of events, we need a 360-degree view. If you look at who is within range of Russian missiles in Europe, then it's just the Central and Eastern European states and us." Germany will use its EU Presidency to "work on a joint threat analysis" and to develop "defence systems." This would increasingly involve "drones, swarms of AI-controlled drones or hypersonic weapons."

What Kramp-Karrenbauer and the ruling class have in mind is the comprehensive militarization of society. She is pleased "that we have been able to make the *Bundeswehr* somewhat more visible in the midst of society, with troops taking a public pledge before the German *Bundestag* [federal parliament] on the *Bundeswehr*'s birthday and the free train rides for those in uniform." She added that it was also important "to maintain force overhauls as a *Bundeswehr* capability in its own right," the planned acquisition of new fighter jets and "also our demands on industry in terms of operational readiness and equipment."

And all this is only the beginning. "What is now up for discussion is the question of arming drones to protect our soldiers," adds Kramp-Karrenbauer.

The entire interview makes it clear that the extreme right-wing networks in the army are only the sharpest expression of the right-wing offensive of the grand coalition of the CDU–Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the entire ruling class. With the revival of German militarism, the militaristic traditions that are historically linked above all to the unruly *Soldateska* [bands of soldiers] of the Kaiserreich (Imperial Empire) and the *Wehrmacht* (armed forces of Nazi Germany) are inevitably returning.

In response to the remark of *Die*

“comradeship, war, dying for one’s country, killing someone” was “practically non-existent in the public self-representation of the Bundeswehr,” Kramp-Karrenbauer replied that precisely this had to change. “We are an army. We are armed. When in doubt, soldiers must also kill,” she declared. Unlike in the past, “today, dangerous foreign missions are common. Those who join the Bundeswehr know that. That is also part of what I understand by a well-fortified democracy and a strong Europe.”

Kramp-Karrenbauer protests that she really does not take the fascist terror networks in the army, “which hoard ammunition and prepare for a ‘Day X,’” “lightly,” which may or may not be the case. In any case, she is systematically working with the military leadership to cover up the extent of the extreme right-wing conspiracy in the army. “There is no general suspicion. The attitude of the absolute majority of our soldiers is correct,” she claims.

Regarding her latest measures to restructure the KSK elite force, recently shown to harbour a multitude of soldiers professing neo-Nazi views, Kramp-Karrenbauer makes it clear that it serves less to crush the extreme right-wing forces than to promote them and extend their long-secret practice of “targeted killing.” The KSK’s operations were subject to “special secrecy, if only so as not to endanger their success,” she said. But from within the unit itself, “there is now a desire to speak more openly about the operations. We will make this possible, and this is also part of the decisions that have been made recently.”

The interview with Kramp-Karrenbauer is a warning. It underlines that the ruling class, as in the past, will stop at nothing to push forward the interests of German capital both at home and abroad. As in the 1930s, it is reacting to the deep crisis of the capitalist system and the growing resistance in the working class with militarism and fascism.

Significantly, the interview was conducted by Mariam Lau—the *Die Zeit* journalist who already defended right-wing extremist Humboldt Professor Jörg Baberowski (“Hitler was not vicious”) in a detailed article in 2017. Baberowski, who in addition to trivialising and justifying Nazi crimes is also notorious for his calls for brutal war missions and violence, has close ties to the army and the defence ministry.

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