

German Air Force chief calls for the use of nuclear weapons against Russia

Johannes Stern**22 June 2022**

While the NATO powers are escalating the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) is threatening Moscow with the use of nuclear weapons. According to a report in the *Bild* newspaper, the Air Force head Ingo Gerhartz stated at the Kiel International Seapower Symposium on Friday:

“For credible deterrence, we need both the means and the political will to implement nuclear deterrence if necessary.” According to the newspaper, he added threateningly, “Putin, don’t mess with us! By 2030, Europeans will have 600 modern fighter jets in the Baltic Sea region. Then there are the Americans’ planes.”

The fact that a German general is openly threatening to use nuclear weapons against Russia must be taken as a serious warning. Seventy-seven years after the fall of the Third Reich, a fascist mentality is once again spreading in the ruling class. It is ready to commit the worst crimes once again in order to assert its imperialist interests.

The Wehrmacht’s war of annihilation against the Soviet Union which began 81 years ago today and in which the Luftwaffe under its then leader Hermann Göhring played a central role, resulted in the death of about 30 million Soviet citizens. A comprehensive nuclear war with Russia would not only turn Europe into a nuclear desert, but it would also call into question the survival of all humanity.

Figures like Gerhartz are apparently totally unmoved by such a scenario. In a recent interview on the official YouTube channel of the German Armed Forces, he defended the proxy war being waged by Germany and the other leading NATO powers against Russia, which increasingly directly raises the threat of a nuclear war.

The general began by celebrating the “successes” of the Ukrainian Air Force against Russia. He “admired the courage and bravery with which it acts there.” The country has “repeatedly succeeded in occasionally shooting down Russian planes and helicopters.” German “help” played a central role in this. For example, Ukraine was supplied with Stinger missiles “to combat enemy aircraft,” and these have “even shot down one or the other combat aircraft and also

helicopters.”

Now the support has to go “even further.” “The Luftwaffe will supply the Iris-T SLM system and thus a rocket that we have developed for the Eurofighter to shoot down enemy aircraft and helicopters,” he continued.

Gerhartz leaves no doubt that the German military is de facto already at war with Russia. In an interview, he praised the rapid advance of the German Air Force in Eastern Europe. “After the Russian forces invaded Ukraine, the Air Force was the first to move its Eurofighters to Romania,” he said. They have “shown what the Air Force has to show, that we are fast.” The Patriot missile defense systems already “rolled into Slovakia one week after the invasion.”

The general made clear that the Bundeswehr is preparing for a comprehensive military confrontation behind the backs of the population. Among other things, he called for the rapid procurement of a national missile defense system. This is “now urgently also a gap that we must close.” In order to be able to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles in space, he proposed to politicians the acquisition of the US-Israeli “Arrow 3” system, he explained.

Gerhartz is particularly proud of the prompt acquisition of the US F-35 fighter jets, which were funded from the €100 billion “Bundeswehr Special Fund.” He said he was “glad that we were able to achieve this in this government” and that “we will now move forward very, very quickly.” The F-35 were the “most modern system at present” and enabled the Air Force to “act strongly against the Russian armed forces, against Putin … in the alliance.”

What this “acting in an alliance” precisely means in an emergency is regulated by the NATO concept of so-called “nuclear participation.” In the event of a nuclear war against Russia, German combat aircraft would be armed with US nuclear bombs stored in Germany and would also use them. According to an article on the official website of the Ministry of Defence, “the possible arming” of the F-35 includes “free-falling nuclear weapons.”

Gerhartz’s nuclear threats against Russia are not simply the testimony of a mad general but are consistent with the

logic of war. With the systematic military encirclement of Russia by NATO, the imperialist powers, especially Germany and the US, provoked Putin's reactionary attack on Ukraine. Above all, they are now responding to the deep economic crisis and the growing opposition of the working class with a further escalation of war, which literally provokes the use of nuclear weapons.

Above all, the ruling class in Germany is striking out more and more recklessly and sees war as an opportunity to return to an aggressive foreign and great power policy after their monstrous crimes in two world wars.

In a keynote speech at a conference of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung yesterday, Lars Klingbeil, Co-Leader of the SPD, stated that "after almost 80 years of restraint ... Germany now has a new role in the global coordinate system." Germany is "increasingly at the centre" and must "have the ambition to be a leadership power."

Klingbeil explicitly understands this to mean the use of military weapons. "For me, a peace policy also means seeing military force as a legitimate means of politics," he stated.

He praised the special assets of the Bundeswehr, the decision of Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) to "deploy more German troops on NATO's eastern flank" and demanded that Europe "be given more weight as a geopolitical actor." This is the only way to survive "in the coming years" in the international "competition for relationships, dependencies, connections, cooperation and projection"—that is, the imperialist redivision of the world.

The costs of this megalomaniac policy are to be passed on to the working class. "This new role as a leading power will demand tough decisions from Germany, including financial and political decisions," he threatened. One must "change structures, also renegotiate budgets."

The ruling class knows that the policy of war abroad, as in the past, requires the militarisation of society and the establishment of a dictatorship at home. He wants "we as a society to develop a new normality with the Bundeswehr. That we develop a self-evident way of paying respect and recognition to those who do their service for our country, who are willing to go to extremes if Parliament so decides."

The warmongers in the media underscored that there are no more moral boundaries for these "extremes." Earlier this week, *Der Spiegel* Editor Dirk Kurbjuweit published an article directly calling for "German nuclear weapons."

Kurbjuweit cynically explains that "only a functioning nuclear deterrent can prevent great wars." This would include "a debate that is not yet underway: If Europe cannot rely one hundred percent on the United States, if Germany cannot rely one hundred percent on France and Britain, does Germany not also need nuclear weapons?" He said that when he wrote these words, it sent "chills down his spine."

"But if you think through all that is currently happening," he continued, "you have to ask yourself this question."

The fact that the call for German nuclear weapons is raised by Kurbjuweit of all people sheds light on the "new era" of foreign policy that has been proclaimed. In reality, the "new era" was prepared over a lengthy period of time. It was Kurbjuweit who, just a few days after representatives of the Federal Government announced the end of military restraint at the 2014 Munich Security Conference, published the notorious article "The Transformation of the Past" in *Der Spiegel*.

Kurbjuweit attacked the historian Fritz Fischer, who had proved in his 1961 book *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (*Grab for World Power*) that the German Empire had a large share of responsibility in the outbreak of the First World War. Fischer's theses are "basically scandalous," he quoted the now emeritus Humboldt Professor Herfried Münkler.

With regard to the German crimes in the Second World War, Kurbjuweit gave the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte, who died in 2016, a platform. Nolte had already claimed in the historians' dispute in the 1980s that the Holocaust was a justified reaction against the Soviet Union. Kurbjuweit quoted the Berlin "historian" Jörg Baberowski, a declared follower of Nolte, as saying: "Hitler was not a psychopath, and he wasn't vicious. He did not want to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table."

Eight years have passed since these repugnant statements, and all the warnings of the Socialist Equality Party and its youth organization, the IYSSE, at the time have been dramatically confirmed. The relativization of the historical crimes of German imperialism serves to prepare new wars and new crimes. It is high time to draw the necessary conclusions and join the struggle for a powerful socialist anti-war movement of the international working class.



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