Germany’s military-academic complex publishes war manifesto

Gregor Link
29 July 2022

On July 20, the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) published a guest article by 22 academics and soldiers. The statement can only be described as a war manifesto of the German military-academic complex.

The piece argues for a continuation of the murderous proxy war in Ukraine, denounces any “desire for an early ceasefire and political solution” as “dangerous,” and calls for “the standard and quantity of Western arms deliveries” to be increased.

The appeal underlines the aggressiveness with which German imperialism is supporting the NATO proxy war in Ukraine. The authors explicitly state that there is “no room for maneuver” for a “ceasefire” or a “diplomatic solution” in Ukraine. They assert that in order to avert a Russian “dictated peace”—that is, to defeat the Russian army in Ukraine—“the firepower and counter-attack capability in particular” of the Ukrainian military has to be “massively” strengthened. The aim of the war must be “to gain time for the sanctions to take effect,” and thus to limit Russia’s “military power” over the long term.

To justify this agenda, the newspaper draws on the standard propaganda of the NATO powers and turns reality upside down. The Kremlin regime “systematically planned and prepared the war in Ukraine for several years” and aimed at “destroying Western societies, democratic political systems and international institutions,” assert the authors. Russia, they continue, is striving for a years-long “war of attrition” in Ukraine, and wants to trigger a recession in Germany “by shutting down the supply of natural gas.”

If the war is ended by a “hasty ‘diplomatic solution,’” the authors state in truly Orwellian fashion, “further serious war crimes and destruction are threatened in Ukraine.”

In reality, it is the Western powers, including Germany, that are pursuing a destructive imperialist great power policy with the war in Ukraine, having “systematically planned and prepared” the conflict. The NATO powers encircled Russia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and massively built up and modernised Ukraine’s armed forces after the pro-Western coup in 2014. They intentionally provoked the Russian invasion. Now they are using the war to weaken and ultimately subjugate the resource-rich country so that it can be exploited and controlled by the imperialist powers.

The “Manifesto of the 22” articulates this unequivocally. According to the authors, the war in Ukraine “represents the beginning of a new era, the consequences of which are still not understood by many.” They continue: “The failure of the Russian troops” and “the enormous losses inflicted on the Russian professional army” provide Germany and its allies with “opportunities for influencing further developments that must not be wasted.”

The war offensive is directed not only against Russia, but also against China. The article deplores China’s “barely veiled sympathy for Russia’s position,” which shows that “we are at a point in time where the democratic states are facing an alliance of powerful authoritarian regimes that seek to eliminate the liberal, rules-based international order, which rests on collaboration in the solution of global problems.”

Indeed, under the guise of “freedom” and “democracy,” the imperialist powers are preparing for a third world war against the nuclear-armed powers Russia and China. NATO’s new Strategic Concept states, among other things, that it will “individually and collectively supply the full spectrum of armed forces needed for deterrence and defence, including for high-intensity cross-dimension warfare against peer competitors possessing nuclear weapons.”

The danger of a third world war fought with nuclear weapons does not prevent the signatories of the war manifesto in the FAZ from demanding that the decisions of the NATO summit in Madrid be “swiftly implemented.” Behind the madness are definite imperialist goals. Above all, the ruling class in Germany sees war as an opportunity to put its long-developed war and great power plans into action.

Specifically, the paper demands that the German Armed Forces “play a leading role” within the framework of the NATO alliance, and “swiftly” implement a military strategy “for Poland and the Baltic States,” as well as for the entire “Baltic Sea Region.” In addition, a strategy must be developed that “points beyond the immediate war.” Given the “massive mistakes” and “humiliating losses” on the Russian side, it would be “negligent” to fail to utilise the “options” presented by the “current Russian weakness,” the authors argue.

The historical implications of this programme are as clear as they are far-reaching. By marching once again into Eastern

© World Socialist Web Site

Europe and waging war in Ukraine in order to defeat Russia, the German military is reviving its war goals in the First and Second World Wars. It supports and arms the political heirs of those forces that cooperated with the Wehrmacht and the SS in the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union.

Then as now, a class of academics plays a central and repulsive role in advancing and ideologically masking the war policy of the ruling class. Among the signatories of the war appeal are German professors and chair holders at the universities of Kiel, Bradford, Bonn and Potsdam, as well as high-ranking officers and professors at the military universities in Hamburg and Munich. In addition, there are members of various geopolitical think tanks and militaristic training academies. Six signatories alone are associated with the Institute for Security Policy at the University of Kiel (ISPK), which is close to the German Navy.

Many of the authors have been ever-present in the media since the beginning of the war, put forward to spread the poison of militarism. Among the most prominent are Carlo Masala (University of Munich) and Sönke Neitzel (University of Potsdam), as well as the NATO military planner and DGAP fellow Heinrich Brauß, the Austrian analyst Gustav Gressel (European Council on Foreign Relations) and the propagandist for German nuclear weapons Maximilian Terhalle (London School of Economics).

Former General Klaus Wittmann, one of the authors, recently demanded a "Ukrainian counter-offensive" with German tanks in the southeast of the country in the right-wing Springer press.

Since 2013, the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) and its youth organisation, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), have warned about the transformation of universities into centres for militarism and war propaganda, as occurred prior to the First and Second World Wars. At that time, the SGP and IYSSE were the only political organisations to oppose the militaristic conspiracy in the state apparatus and showed how the end of Germany's "military restraint" was systematically prepared by leading political, military, media and academic circles.

From the publication of the programmatic paper "New Power, New Responsibility," to the issuing of a new German Armed Forces white paper and the relativisation of the crimes of the Nazis by Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski ("Hitler wasn't vicious"), we demonstrated the role of professors and academics in the return of German militarism. Christoph Vandreier, long-time spokesman of the IYSSE in Germany and the current chairman of the SGP, explained in his book *Why Are They Back?* that "the ruling elite in Germany must relativize and trivialize the greatest crimes of human history in order to revive the goals of two world wars."

At Berlin's Humboldt University, which plays a central role in this, the IYSSE is at the forefront of the fight against the attempts of the university administration to suppress criticism of right-wing extremist and militarist positions. The positions of Baberowski and Herfried Münkler—according to which Germany must become the "disciplinarian of Europe," and the Nazi war of extermination must be seen as an understandable reaction to the violence of the Bolsheviks—correspond to the policy of the ruling class.

Under conditions of the concrete danger of nuclear war and the largest German rearmament programme since the fall of the Nazi regime, leading government politicians pay tribute to a Ukrainian ambassador who denies critical aspects of the Holocaust before a global audience. The German government's stated goal is to dominate Europe militarily and make the EU "a geopolitical player" under Berlin's leadership.

Only a powerful international anti-war movement of the working class can halt the drive to World War Three and prevent the historical crimes of German imperialism from being eclipsed by new ones. The strikes, mass protests and social unrest that have developed all over the world since the beginning of the war in Ukraine show that the basis for such a movement is already in the making.

The war-mongering professors and generals are also aware of this. "The next two years will be very difficult," they conclude in their manifesto. "It is with great concern" that one must state "there are repeated calls for a political solution or a ceasefire." In order to counter the foreseeable social and political eruption, "a concerted action by all relevant social and political forces" is required.

The working class must oppose the war conspiracy and the "concerted action" of the ruling class with its own programme. The SGP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) will do everything in their power to arm the fight against war, militarism and social misery with a socialist and internationalist perspective. The task of building these organisations now assumes the utmost urgency.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site