In interview, German Foreign Minister Wadephul takes the war course against Russia to the extreme

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An interview that Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul (CDU) gave to the *Bild* newspaper on September 8 underscores the aggressiveness with which the German government is pushing forward its war course against Russia. With remarkable openness, Wadephul links the military escalation in Ukraine with the profit interests of the German arms industry and the return of Ukrainian refugees of military age to Ukraine.

Regarding German military aid for Kiev, Wadephul declares: "We are now the strongest supporter of Ukraine when it comes to financial and military support." From this he derived the claim of German arms corporations to lucrative contracts: "And naturally it must be the case that the German defence industry profits from this." During his last visit, he had personally told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that German defence companies "must also be involved" in procurement measures.

Nor did Wadephul stop there. He complained that Berlin was "not entirely satisfied" with the volume of Ukrainian orders placed in Germany. The German government had therefore explicitly called on Kiev to "ensure that this improves." The supposedly selfless "support" for Ukraine is thus described by a representative of the German government for what it is: an instrument of German economic and great-power policy.

In the same interview, Wadephul supports the demand by CSU leader Markus Söder to induce Ukrainian men of military age to return to Ukraine. The German government could even help Kiev track them down: "We know who lives here," Wadephul explains, pointing to data on social benefit recipients, registration status and residence permits. On this basis, the men could be contacted by the Ukrainian government "to tell them that they are to be called up."

Wadephul's claim that this should take place "without coercion" merely serves to conceal the brutal character of his announcement. The foreign minister advocates making German registration data and information on the residence status of Ukrainian refugees available for their mobilisation by the Ukrainian state. While German arms corporations profit from the war, Ukrainian workers and young people who fled to Germany because of the war are to be sent back to the front as cannon fodder.

The class logic of the war emerges openly in these statements. At the top, German arms corporations are to "naturally" profit from the billions spent on war; at the bottom, Ukrainian workers and young people are to pay for it with their lives at the front.

The same logic applies in Germany. While Rheinmetall and other arms corporations are showered with ever new major contracts, workers are to finance rearmament through social cuts, higher contributions and falling real wages, while a new generation is mobilised for the Bundeswehr and for a comprehensive war against Russia.

The war is not a "defensive war" for "freedom" and "democracy" in the interests of the population, but a class war in the interests of the ruling elites: the profits and geopolitical interests of the corporations and German imperialism are paid for with billions from public coffers and with the lives of workers and young people, and lead inevitably to a Europe-wide catastrophe.

Wadephul's remarks on further escalation against Russia are particularly provocative. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had described the latest German measures—including the closure of the Russian Consulate General in Bonn and the Russian House in Berlin—as the "beginning of a real war." Wadephul brushed aside the warning: "We know very well, and Sergei Lavrov of course also knows, that Russia did this thing in Leipzig."

In fact, to this day the German government has presented no publicly verifiable evidence that Russia was behind the drone incident at Leipzig Airport on August 4. Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt merely referred in general terms to investigations and intelligence findings, as well as alleged similarities in components, explosives and ignition technology with earlier operations. Nevertheless, Chancellor Merz declared even before the official "attribution" that Russia was responsible and threatened: "They will pay for this."

The measures announced in response go far beyond diplomatic protest. In addition to closing Russian institutions, Berlin is tightening entry regulations, increasing pressure on Russian ships of the so-called "shadow fleet" and pressing within the EU for further measures against Moscow.

It is significant that the German government announced its escalation precisely on September 1—the 87th anniversary of the German invasion of Poland and the beginning of the Second World War. At that time, the Nazis staged the alleged Polish attack on the Gleiwitz radio station in order to present their long-prepared assault as a defensive measure. Now the German government is once again resorting to similar political methods: an unproven accusation is presented as an incontrovertible fact and used to

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justify long-prepared escalation measures.

Berlin is thus creating, step by step, a situation in which any provocation, miscalculation or military confrontation can trigger an open war between NATO and nuclear-armed Russia.

This course stands in a dark historical continuity. For the third time in just over a century, German imperialism is directing its strategic offensive eastward and against Russia. In the First World War, the Kaiserreich sought to bring Eastern Europe and large parts of the Russian Empire under its economic and political domination. In the Second World War, the Nazis continued this in the form of a racist war of extermination.

On June 22, 1941, more than 3 million German soldiers invaded the Soviet Union. The war aimed at conquering vast territories, controlling raw materials, enslaving and exterminating entire population groups and destroying the Soviet Union. At least 27 million Soviet citizens were killed. Millions of Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.

Today, the same fundamental contradictions of the capitalist world system are erupting once again, and with them the great-power ambitions of German imperialism. With the permanent stationing of a tank brigade several thousand strong in Lithuania, German tanks and soldiers are once again in the immediate vicinity of Russia and Belarus. The new German military strategy defines Russia as the main adversary, the Bundeswehr is being built up into the "strongest conventional army in Europe," and the whole of society is being placed on a war footing within the framework of "comprehensive defence."

The fact that Wadephul gave his interview at the same time as the general debate on the federal budget underscores the connection. For 2027, the German government is planning defence spending of almost €152 billion—more than ever before in the history of the Federal Republic. Almost €110 billion is allocated to the regular military budget and nearly €30 billion to the "special fund for the Bundeswehr." A further €11.6 billion for weapons and equipment for Ukraine is booked outside the defence budget.

Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) explained in his budget speech where the billions are going and what purpose they serve. The war in Ukraine was providing the Bundeswehr with "important lessons," he declared. It needed modern tanks, artillery, frigates and air defence, as well as thousands of so-called loitering ammunition systems, drones, AI-supported command systems and a "dense network of satellites." With Uranos AI and the F-35 fighter jets, the "next technological leap" would be made. Uranos AI is explicitly designed to monitor large areas on NATO's eastern flank and is initially intended to equip the brigade in Lithuania.

The major media are taking on the task of ideologically preparing the population for this war course. The current issue of *Der Spiegel* bears the title: "We Are the Daily Target of Hybrid Warfare—Russia's Aggression and Germany's Response." In his editorial, editor-in-chief Dirk Kurbjuweit openly names the enemy: "Russia is Germany's enemy." This is, he writes, a "bitter, infinitely sad sentence," but it must be spoken "so that everyone can adjust to the situation."

That Kurbjuweit, of all people, is leading this campaign is significant. In February 2014, just a few days after the then German government had proclaimed the end of military restraint at the Munich Security Conference and shortly before the overthrow in Kiev, *Der Spiegel* published a programmatic article on the revision of German history under the title "The Transformation of the Past." The issue explicitly raised the question of German guilt for the two world wars.

In it, Kurbjuweit gave extensive space to Ernst Nolte, who had relativised National Socialism as a reaction to Bolshevism and thereby triggered the *Historikerstreit*. Although Kurbjuweit himself admitted that Nolte's claim of an alleged Jewish "share in the Gulag" had long been an argument used by antisemites, he declared: "But this man was not wrong about everything." Kurbjuweit quoted the Berlin historian and Nolte supporter Jörg Baberowski with the notorious words: "Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not vicious."

At the time, the Socialist Equality Party warned that the return of German militarism was inseparably bound up with the whitewashing of the historical crimes of German imperialism. Twelve years later, the significance of this warning is becoming ever clearer. Germany is rearming to become the strongest military power in Europe, stationing German combat units in the East once again, producing weapons for attacks deep into Russian territory, mobilising young people for the army, openly declaring Russia the enemy, and arming and financing a regime in Kiev that celebrates Ukrainian Nazi collaborators such as Stepan Bandera as national heroes.

The revival of fascism and the escalation of war cannot be stopped by appeals to Merz, Wadephul, Pistorius or other capitalist forces, all of whom support the course of rearmament and the shift to the right in one form or another. They can be halted only through an independent movement of the German, Russian, Ukrainian and international working class against war and its cause, the capitalist profit system.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is fighting for this perspective in the Berlin state election on September 20. Under the slogans "Two World Wars Are Enough!" and "Socialism, Not War!" it opposes the war coalition of the established parties and fights to build an international socialist movement of the working class against militarism, fascism and war.

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