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German politicians and media intensify war threats against Russia

Germany's leading media outlets have been aggressively promoting war against Russia for days. The country's political representatives are now also sharpening their tone. Their arrogant and aggressive demeanor is reminiscent of the German warmongers on the eve of World War I and World War II.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock | Pooled photo by Maxim Shemetov/ AFP via Getty Images

Green Party Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock used the meeting with her British, French and American counterparts in Berlin yesterday to make new threats against Russia.

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Any further Russian aggression would have “serious consequences,” she explained in a joint appearance with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Moscow would then pay a “high price”— “economically, politically and, above all, strategically,” she declared.

The day before, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrats, SPD), who was previously considered the defender of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, sharpened the tone towards Moscow in a speech at the World Economic Forum. “The Russian side knows about our determination,” he said. “I hope they also realize that the benefits of cooperation far outweigh the cost of further confrontation.”

While Scholz and Baerbock have so far officially ruled out the delivery of German arms to Ukraine, other representatives of the governing parties are demanding just that. “The delivery of defensive weapons could be a way to support Ukraine,” said Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (Free Democrats, FDP), Chair of the Parliamentary Defense Committee, in an interview with t-online.de.

Ukraine is “not a member of NATO. But our Western alliance must not stand by while Putin’s tanks overrun the country. As NATO, we must stand with Ukraine,” she added menacingly. It is “time that we Europeans finally must take more care of our own continent. Not only do we have to be able to defend [it], we also have to be willing to defend [it].”

In an interview with the *Tagesspiegel*, Former Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) adopted a similar tone and called for a more aggressive response from the federal government and the European Union (EU) against Russia. “But do we Europeans really want to let things go that way?” he asks angrily. “Where have all the great speeches gone that Europe should become a ‘geopolitical actor’ and ‘learn the language of power’?”

In order to justify his own world and superpower ambitions, he also employed the myth of the “Russian aggressor,” who is not only about to overrun Ukraine but possibly all of Europe. Russia is “taking the opportunity of a weakened Europe and a weakened US President ... to increase its influence in Europe. If we go along with this now, who will be able to say something when the next states are in line.”

The non-stop propaganda of an imminent Russian attack is turning reality on its head. It corresponds to the lies spread by the ruling class before the two world wars to justify their own aggression.

When the German Reich declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm II justified this with the words: “If our neighbor doesn’t want it any other way, if he doesn’t begrudge us peace, I hope to God that our good German sword emerges victorious from this difficult battle.”

The Nazis, too, presented their long-planned war of annihilation in the East, in which 27 million Soviet citizens fell victim, as a “war of defence.” It was “necessary to oppose this conspiracy of the Jewish-Bolshevik war instigators...,” said a proclamation by the Führer, which the then Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels read on the radio shortly after the start of the German attack on June 22, 1941. “The task” is “to secure Europe and thus save everyone.”

Nazi anti-Semitism aside, the current war campaign follows this tradition. Even today, Russia is not the aggressor, but the policy of the imperialist powers runs along lines similar to those of Germany in 1914 and 1941. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union 30 years ago, NATO has systematically encircled Russia. In early 2014, Washington and Berlin, supported by fascist forces such as the Svoboda Party and the Right Sector, organized a coup in Ukraine to install an anti-Russian regime there.

Since then, the imperialist powers have used Russia’s predominantly defensive reaction to systematically advance their war and rearmament offensive. NATO has so-called “Battlegroups” stationed in Poland and the Baltic States. Massive military maneuvers are taking place near the Russian border almost uninterruptedly. The goal is militarily encircling Russia and forcing it into the status of a semi-colony to be exploited and dominated by the imperialist powers.

For the warmongers in the media, this strategy is not being implemented quickly and aggressively enough. “Germany should also show toughness very clearly,” demanded Stefan Kornelius, head of the politics desk at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in his latest podcast. “To German ears” that sounds “very dangerous and risky,” but one has to “put oneself in

the Russian position and consider: what could prevent Russia from militarily invading Ukraine again?” And these should “actually be threats that hurt Russia.”

By this Cornelius explicitly means the preparations for war. “The way in which Russia has behaved in recent weeks” should also have made it clear to the German “Foreign Minister that reason and good arguments will no longer get you anywhere,” he fumes. “If you don't want war, you have to prepare for war.”

Kornelius does not simply speak for himself, but for a whole squad of journalists who write as if they had done their internships in the Nazi propaganda rags.

In another comment, Daniel Brössler, correspondent of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in the newspaper's Parliament office, provocatively declared that those who do not immediately call for arms for Ukraine and war are the greatest threat to peace. The fact that Russia “does not have to fear a really serious answer from the West” does not serve “détente, but rather increases the risk of war,” he writes.

Die Zeit devoted its entire current issue to warmongering against Russia. An article about the “travelling negotiator” Baerbock criticizes the fact that the new federal government is relying “on words instead of weapons” in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The newspaper's foreign policy correspondent, Michael Thumann, suggested in an op-ed entitled “On the move” that Russia not only wants to subdue Ukraine, but all of Europe. and *Zeit*-Editor Josef Joffe justified the comparison between Putin and Hitler in an online comment.

The notorious warmongers like Kornelius and Joffe are joined by a young class of up-and-coming writers whose historical and political ignorance is surpassed only by their aggressiveness. In *Die Welt* a certain Gregor Schwing (born 1995) complains that Europe is already “laying down its arms before the war begins.”

The 34-year-old Ulrike Franke, an employee of the European Council on Foreign Relations, complained in *Die Zeit* that the younger generation is unwilling to “think in terms of power and interests” and rejects “the military as an element that determines geopolitical influence.”

One wonders if any of these “journalists” have even remotely considered the consequences of their constant calls for “weapons,” “military,” and active preparation for war against Russia. What if the Russian military takes the threats seriously and actually takes countermeasures? A military confrontation between NATO and Russia would turn all of Europe into a theater of war and, if nuclear weapons were used, would jeopardize the survival of all humankind.

Madness has objective causes. As in the 1930s, the ruling class is reacting to the deep crisis of capitalism with a turn towards militarism, fascism and war. A few months after the then Foreign Minister and current Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) declared at the 2014 Munich Security Conference that Germany was “too big and too strong economically for us to be able to comment on world politics only from the sidelines,” the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) wrote:

The propaganda of the post-war era—that Germany had learnt from the terrible crimes of the Nazis, had “arrived at the West,” had embraced a peaceful foreign policy, and had developed into a stable democracy—is exposed as lies. German imperialism is once again showing its real colours as it emerged historically, with all of its aggressiveness at home and abroad.

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated this development. In Germany, too, social anger over the “profits before lives” policy is growing. While more than 116,000 people have died of COVID-19 in this country alone since the outbreak of the pandemic, a small layer at the top of society has perversely enriched itself. In order to divert social tensions outwards and to strengthen the state apparatus of repression at home, the ruling class is banking on war.

The Putin regime has no progressive response to the aggression. It represents the interests of a mafia-like oligarchy that has enriched itself enormously since the Stalinist bureaucracy reintroduced capitalism. The Russian government fears the growing social and political opposition of the working class as much as it does the imperialist powers. For its part, it reacted to the threats from Washington, London, Brussels and Berlin with diplomatic and military maneuvers that further increased the risk of war.

In order to prevent the ruling class from plunging the planet into the abyss, overwhelming popular opposition must be mobilized against war on the basis of a clear political perspective. An anti-war movement must be built on the principles advanced by the International Committee of the Fourth International in its 2016 statement, “Socialism and the fight against war”:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.
- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.
- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.
- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism. The permanent war of the bourgeoisie must be answered with the perspective of permanent revolution by the working class, the strategic goal of which is the abolition of the nation-state system and the establishment of a world socialist federation. This will make possible the rational, planned development of global resources and, on this basis, the eradication of poverty and the raising of human culture to new heights.

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