

German government uses 75th anniversary of plot to kill Hitler to promote rearmament and war

By Johannes Stern
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Under the new Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the Grand Coalition is preparing a further escalation of German militarism. The appearance of the CDU leader and Chancellor Angela Merkel last Saturday in front of 400 recruits in the Berlin Bendlerblock, the secondary seat of the Ministry of Defense, left no doubt about this. The occasion for the reactionary spectacle was the ceremonial oath of the Bundeswehr (Federal Defence Forces) on the 75th anniversary of the failed July 20 plot of 1944 to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

In her first public speech as Defense Minister, Kramp-Karrenbauer made it clear that she wanted to "continue the "modernization" of the Bundeswehr with all her might" and would unconditionally stand up for the interests of the military.

"Thanks alone are not enough," she assured the generals, admirals and new recruits. "Your service requires respect; your service requires esteem; your service requires support. First and foremost, by me. I know: Germany can rely on you. And I'm telling you, you can count on me." This applies "in a special way to all those women and men who are in action, who fight abroad for our security and our values".

In her speech Merkel made similar comments and announced that she would press ahead with military armament. "Our soldiers must receive the support, equipment and training necessary to carry out their task. That is why we have already increased our defence spending and will continue to do so. We owe that to our soldiers. We owe that to our partners in the United Nations, NATO and the European Union."

The Chancellor went through a list of countries and regions in which German imperialism is already asserting its interests by force of arms: "German soldiers are taking

part in UN- and EU-led missions, such as in Mali—I was able to convince myself of the high level of operational readiness there again this year—on the Horn of Africa or off the coast of Lebanon. They're stationed in the Balkans. They work for NATO in Afghanistan and Lithuania."

And from the standpoint of the federal government, that's just the beginning. In recent years, the concept of "national and alliance defence"—in plain language this means preparing for a possible war against nuclear armed Russia—has "regained importance", the Chancellor explained. This was shown by "our mission in Lithuania" and "very impressive" were "the demonstrations in Munster at the NATO spearhead under German leadership in May". She was "of the firm conviction: We must always prove that we are ready and able to deploy our forces and defend ourselves".

It is only logical that the ruling class in its return to an aggressive foreign policy is celebrating the assassins of July 20 who all hailed from the *Wehrmacht* (armed forces of Nazi Germany) and, as representatives of German militarism, wanted above all to avert Germany's complete military defeat in the Second World War. They were not pioneers "against injustice, dictatorship, barbarism and contempt for humanity," as Kramp-Karrenbauer claimed in her speech, but rather opponents of the growing progressive and socialist opposition among workers and youth, as it found expression in resistance groups such as the White Rose or the Red Chapel.

Contrary to the propaganda spread by the federal government and all the established parties, the conspirators of July 20 around Claus von Stauffenberg were mostly right-wing anti-democrats, anti-Semites and nationalists who had long supported the Hitler regime and were themselves deeply involved in Nazi crimes.

Here are just a few examples: **General Eduard Wagner**, who provided the plane that brought Stauffenberg to the Wolf's Lair, Hitler's military headquarters, and back to Berlin after the assassination attempt, played a central role in the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. "Non-working prisoners of war in the prison camps have to starve to death," he noted in November 1941. Regarding the Leningrad blockade, he wrote to his wife on September 9, 1941: "First you have to let Petersburg starve, what are we supposed to do with a city three-and-a-half million that only lays on our food supplies. There's no such thing as sentimentality."

Wolf-Heinrich von Helldorf, with whom Stauffenberg had met personally several times in 1944 and whom Himmler named first among the conspirators in his speech to the *Gauleiter* (party leaders of the regional branches of the Nazi party) on August 3, 1944, had been a member of the NSDAP, SA, and SS long before the transfer of power to Hitler. Together with Joseph Goebbels, then Gauleiter of Berlin, he organized the so-called "Kurfüstendamm riot", the first anti-Semitic pogrom in Berlin on September 12, 1931, the day of the Jewish New Year.

Later he played a central role in the deportation of Jews from the capital. "Helldorff presents me with a list of the measures taken in Berlin against the Jews. They are now truly rigorous and comprehensive. In this way we will drive the Jews out of Berlin in the foreseeable future," Goebbels noted in his diary on 2 July 1938.

SS-Gruppenführer **Arthur Nebe**, whose units should have been arresting leading representatives of the Nazi regime after the assassination, led the infamous Einsatzgruppe B during the first months of the war against the Soviet Union. Under his command, the SS death squad murdered more than 45,000 civilians, the majority of whom were Jews. Nebe tested the mass killing by poison gas, procured the poison gas for the murder of handicapped people, e.g. in the T4 campaign, and led the investigations against the communist resistance fighter Georg Elser. Elser had carried out an elaborate assassination attempt against Hitler and almost the entire Nazi leadership in the Munich Bürgerbräukeller on November 8, 1939.

In December 1941, **Stauffenberg** himself welcomed the unification of the authority of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht in Hitler's hands. He had perceived the beginning of the Second World War as "salvation" and, in the course of the invasion of Poland, had written in a

letter to his wife: "The population is an incredible mob, many Jews and many mixed people. A people that only feels comfortable under the whip. The thousands of prisoners will be good for our agriculture. In Germany, they are certainly good to use, they are hardworking, willing and frugal."

Before the assassination, Stauffenberg committed himself "in spirit and in deed to the great traditions" of the German people and "to the Germanic nature". He explained that he despised the "equality lie" and that the "new order" he was striving for should be based on the "recognition of natural ranks".

Against this background, Merkel's statement that the July 20 conspirators "urge us to resolutely oppose right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism and racism in all their manifestations" amounts to utter cynicism. Just like her claim to "ensure that the lessons of history do not fade".

In fact, the ceremonial oath in the Bendlerblock made it clear that the ruling class—unlike the majority of the population, who deeply detest militarism, fascism and war—has not drawn "lessons from history". This is shown by the remembrance of members of the *Wehrmacht* as well as the war policy of the Bundeswehr and the construction of a new right-wing extremist party. Significantly, AfD-leader Rüdiger Lucassen, a former soldier and spokesperson at the Ministry of Defense, took part in the ceremony in the Bendlerblock to commemorate the "courageous patriots" who "tried to save the honor of our nation by risking their lives".

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