

German Publishers and Booksellers Association awards its annual “Peace Prize” to US war hawk Anne Applebaum

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On June 25, the German Publishers and Booksellers Association (Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels), which organises the world’s biggest annual book fair (in Frankfurt), announced it was awarding its annual “Peace Prize” to US journalist and author Anne Applebaum.

Applebaum is a notorious neo-conservative war hawk, closely linked to the US military-intelligence apparatus, who currently plays a leading role in churning out propaganda justifying escalation of the US-NATO war against Russia. The absurdly misnamed “Peace Prize” handed to Applebaum is an endorsement by the German establishment of the drive to world war.

Since 1950 the Börsenverein has generally awarded its prize to leading German and international literary and intellectual figures, such as Alfred Grosser, Karl Jaspers, Thornton Wilder, Hermann Hesse and Albert Schweitzer.

More recently, however, the bestowing of its 2022 Peace Prize to the rabidly anti-Russian Ukrainian poet Serhiy Zhadan demonstrated the increasing right-wing political basis of the Association. Capitulating to the German government’s war frenzy, the Association gave its award to the author of *Sky Above Kharkiv: Dispatches from the Ukrainian Front*, in which Zhadan describes Russians collectively as a “horde,” as “criminals,” “animals” and “filth,” who, he writes, should “Burn in hell, you pigs.”

The honouring of the virulent nationalist Zhadan represented a low point in the Association’s history, but its award this year to the foul sabre-rattler Applebaum is unprecedented. According to the ludicrous statement issued by the jury, Applebaum combines “historiographical insights with alert observation of the present.” At a time “when democratic achievements and values are increasingly being caricatured and attacked,” her work makes a contribution to “democracy and peace.”

A brief look at Applebaum’s career and publications reveals the exact opposite. As much as any living journalist, she is deeply embedded in the US security state. Applebaum is a member of the US Council on Foreign Relations and is a board member of the National Endowment for Democracy, a CIA initiative, and Renew Democracy Initiative, another right-wing outfit with close ties to the US state. She was formerly a Senior Adjunct Fellow at the equally dubious Center for European Policy Analysis. Between 2002 and 2006 she was a member of the editorial board of the *Washington Post*, and she currently writes for the *Atlantic* magazine.

In 2003 Applebaum fully backed the US bombing of Iraq and the subsequent occupation of the country. In an editorial for the *Post* following US Secretary of State Colin Powell’s lying appearance before the UN Security Council, she wrote that it was “hard to imagine how anyone could still doubt that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.”

Applebaum is married to Radosław Sikorski, extreme right-wing Polish politician and Foreign Minister, 2007-2014 and again 2023 to the present. Along with US Secretary of State John Kerry and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Sikorski played a central role in the 2014 Maidan putsch that removed Ukraine’s elected, pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich.

Since then Sikorski has played a leading role in Poland’s preparations for a war with Russia, endorsing the sabotage of the German-Russian Nord Stream pipeline in September 2022, while effectively conceding it had been carried out by NATO. Applebaum, together with her husband, has been in the forefront in agitating for all-out war against Russia.

Summing up Applebaum’s career as a US government

stooge, the WSWS wrote in 2017: “Following the Russian annexation of Crimea, she authored a column in the *Washington Post* in which she called for ‘total war’ against nuclear-armed Russia. She embodies the connection between militarism and political repression.”

In her “historical work,” Applebaum has followed in the footsteps of such veteran anti-communist authors as Robert Conquest and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Whitewashing the role of Ukrainian fascist leader Stefan Bandera, Applebaum wistfully reminisces—in the introduction to her travelogue *Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe* (2017)—that in the course of her trip to Ukraine in 1990 she sighted “in the centre of the main park, old women standing beneath the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag, discussing the fate of Stepan Bandera—the guerrilla leader who fought for Ukrainian independence in the 1930s and 1940s.”

The same year saw the publication of Applebaum’s book *Red Famine*, which echoes the lies of the Ukrainian far-right diaspora alleging that a genocide took place during the Soviet famine in 1931-1933 specifically targeting Ukrainians. In November 2017, Applebaum wrote another article in the *Post* warning of the threat of socialist revolution. Although revolutionary socialists remained few in number, their potential should not be ignored, she argued.

“Remember,” Applebaum wrote, “at the beginning of 1917... most of the men who later became known to the world as the Bolsheviks were conspirators and fantasists on the margins of society. By the end of the year, they ran Russia.” According to Applebaum the lesson of 1917 is clear: “If a system becomes weak enough and the opposition is divided enough, if the ruling order is corrupt enough, extremists can suddenly step into the center, where no one expects them.”

Given Applebaum’s record as a Russophobe and a warmonger it might have occurred to at least some journalists and historians that her nomination for a “peace” prize was wildly inappropriate and even preposterous. Quite the opposite! Indicating the extent of the war frenzy inside German academia and editorial boards, a note of caution or criticism could not be found.

Just two weeks before the announcement by the Börsenverein, the German city of Oldenburg awarded its Carl von Ossietzky prize “for contemporary history and politics” to Applebaum. Praising Applebaum’s “professional perspective” and “journalistic expertise” as “decisive” for “the public debate on the Russian war against Ukraine,” the jury, chaired by a professor from the

Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, gave its award to Applebaum—a decision that would make Ossietzky, Weimar Germany’s leading critic of German militarism, turn in his grave!

As for Germany’s leading newspapers, there was apparently unanimous approval for the Börsenverein’s decision. Reporting on the award, the online portal *perlentaucher* noted: “The feuilletons are delighted that historian and journalist Anne Applebaum has been awarded the Peace Prize. A “‘courageous decision,” commented Jörg Lau in *Zeit Online*. “And precisely because she refuses to engage in the overly naive peace discourse being conducted here in Germany in relation to Ukraine.”

Leading the media campaign to overcome the “overly naive peace discourse” in Germany, Patrick Bahners wrote gushingly in the *FAZ* newspaper that the Börsenverein’s award represented “A signal against the politics of appeasement.” In his article, Bahners went so far as to attack the leader of Germany’s conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and ex-Blackrock Germany executive, Friedrich Merz, from the right. Merz has consistently supported the federal government’s war policy. Nevertheless, Bahners accuses Merz of appeasement merely for the CDU leader’s recent comment that the Ukraine war should end at some point.

Recent polls reveal that 80 percent of the population in Germany (and 90 percent in Poland) oppose an escalation of the war in Ukraine following the call by French President Emmanuel Macron to send troops to Ukraine to fight Russia. In line with the demand by the German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democratic Party, SPD) that the country must “prepare for war,” the German media is determined to play its part and break down the overwhelming opposition to war. That is the significance of the overwhelming support in German newspapers for the Börsenverein’s “Peace Prize” award to the war enthusiast Anne Applebaum.



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