

Who's training the career officers of the Swiss Armed Forces?

by Stefan Hofer,* Basel



Stefan Hofer.
(Picture ma)

Since January 2013, a man named Marcus Matthias Keupp has been working as a lecturer in military economics at the ETH Zurich Military Academy, where the career officers of the Swiss Armed Forces are trained. In November 2013, this PD Dr M. M. Keupp was awarded the ETH Zurich's "Golden Owl" in recognition of outstanding achievements in teaching.

What about the ability of this "Golden Owl" decorated military academy lecturer to analytically assess the military balance of power, the opportunities and risks of military operations and the capacities of a defence industry?

In an interview with the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* [NZZ] (published on 27 March 2023), military lecturer Marcus M. Keupp stated the following assertion:

"Since January, we have probably seen the last Russian initiative in the Donbas that is still possible in this war. This initiative is doomed to fail because the Russians are gradually running out of material and people. Moreover, the situation around Bachmut has no strategic significance for the front line as a whole. Ukraine is currently finishing training its tank crews in Germany and Poland. Which means we can expect a Ukrainian counter-offensive with Western tanks in mid-April. Ukraine will probably advance from Zaporizhia via Melitopol to the Black Sea coast, splitting the front into two. With a swing to the west, they could then encircle the Russian formations between Melitopol and Nova Kakhovka. In addition, they could then place HIMARS missile systems on the coast and take the military installations in Crimea under fire as well as disrupt the logistics. That will be the moment when the Russian defeat becomes apparent. That is my prediction. That's why I said that Russia will have lost the war militarily in October."

* Stefan Hofer, born in 1948, is a Swiss citizen resident in Basel. He worked as a lawyer in Basel for 40 years. He has been retired for several years.

In the meantime, the date given by Mr Keupp for the victory of the Ukrainian army has already been missed by two months. The Ukrainian army has neither advanced to the coast of the Sea of Azov nor has it encircled the Russian units between Melitopol and Nova Kakhovka. On the contrary, the Ukrainian counter-offensive has failed resoundingly with extremely high losses of men and material, which can no longer be denied even by the mainstream press in the West.

Like numerous journalists and self-proclaimed military experts, the lecturer in military economics has claimed that the Russians are "gradually running out of material and people" and that after a maximum of 211 days of war (from 27 March 2023), the Russian army will have lost all of its remaining tanks. In the meantime, more than 250 days have passed and the Russian army still has battle tanks, while a considerable number of the superior *Leopard* and *Challenger* tanks that the NATO states supplied to the Ukrainian army have already been destroyed.

The professor of military economics explained literally:

"What do the Russians have left? They have the myth of a supposed miracle weapon: the *Armata T-14* main battle tank, which to this day has not been seen on the battlefield. In the spring offensive, we should see pictures of western *Leopard 2* and *Challenger 2* tanks, which can shoot much further than Russian tanks and therefore eliminate them from a distance. If you add up the technological boost to the Ukrainians, the Russian casualty rate and the depleting resources, then there is really no conceivable outcome other than a Russian defeat. [...] I have been studying Russia, the Russian army and its defence industry since 2012 and published a book on the subject in 2015."

NZZ journalist *Andreas Rüesch*, who regularly writes about the war in Ukraine and can certainly not be considered a friend of Russia or a *Putin* apologist, takes a much more realistic view of the capabilities and capacities of the Russian defence industry than the ETH lecturer in military economics. This can be read in the NZZ of 29 November 2023:

“The often mocked image of an army that relies on ancient Soviet technology and assault attacks with ‘cannon fodder’ soldiers is all too one-sided. The *Lanzet* kamikaze drones are an example of Russia's ability to innovate. Unlike the long-range *Shahed* drones imported from Iran, which Russia uses to attack Ukraine's energy infrastructure, the *Lanzet* is a Russian in-house development. Moscow has already deployed hundreds of them this year, inflicting heavy losses on the Ukrainian military. [...] The brilliance of this Russian development lies not least in its simplicity. According to Russian figures, the *Lanzet* drones cost only 3 million roubles or the equivalent of CHF 30,000.00 to produce. If it succeeds in destroying a Western military device worth hundreds of thousands or several million dollars, the track record is clear. [...]

The *Lanzet* drones are particularly useful for Russia's military because they partially compensate Russian artillery disadvantages. Thanks to Western supplies, Ukrainian artillery has a longer range and greater precision. Kamikaze drones provide a remedy: they enable the Russians to systematically take out enemy artillery. The *Lanzet* is usually deployed in combination with a reconnaissance drone, e.g., an *Orlan-10*, another Russian in-house development. [...] The Ukrainians have not yet found any good recipes against these weapons. [...] The Ukrainian General Staff's assessment at the beginning of July, that Russia had already used up most of its *Lanzet* drones and only had 50 left, has proven to be wrong. [...] Ukraine has not developed a comparable drone, and the *Switchblade 600* kamikaze drones received from the US have not met the high expectations.”

The military economist Marcus M. Keupp claims that he is not guided by emotional sentiment and that his assessment – which has since been refuted by the course of the war – is realistic and based on military facts. Or so he says:

“What counts for me are the objective facts. And I observe them in actual combat. [...] I am alternately labelled a hyper-realist (sic!) and a NATO warmonger. I can live with that. [...] I will use my analytical skills to accompany this war as objectively and fact-based as possible. [...] History will judge us. Let us see in October whether what I have said is true.”

The course of the war since the publication of this interview has proven that the analytical skills that Mr Keupp ascribes to himself are not very good. Since the publication of the interview quoted, nothing has happened that was not foreseeable or that should not at least have been considered as a possibility. Obviously, Mr Keupp

is possessed by such a strong hatred of Russia and the Putin-led Russian government that he is incapable of making a fact-based and realistic assessment of the military balance of power and the possible course of the war.

Such an attitude is dangerous if it influences and determines political and military decisions. In this context, it should be remembered that *Adolf Hitler*, determined by his hatred of the Russians and the Nazis' ideology of superiority, described the Soviet Union as a colossus with feet of clay and that the officers of the Nazi Wehrmacht promised their soldiers on 21 June 1941 that they would be back home by Christmas. It is well known how the war against the Soviet Union ended and what victims it cost.

As a military economist, Markus M. Keupp is obviously incompetent. The fact that he, as a lecturer at the ETH Military Academy, is involved in the training of career officers in the Swiss army is not only questionable, but downright outrageous. In the interests of our country and our army, Mr Keupp, who has never done a day's military service in his life, should be stripped of his teaching position at the military academy. He would then have more time for his artistic activities, with which he cannot do much harm.

The well-known author Jacques Baud, retired colonel in the Swiss army, who has far more knowledge about the war in Ukraine and understands more about military issues than Mr Keupp, could and should be entrusted with a teaching assignment at the ETH Military Academy.

A realistic assessment of the course of the war in Ukraine leads to the conclusion that the Ukrainian army can neither drive the Russian army out of the Donbass with its majority Russian population nor even out of the Crimea with its almost exclusively Russian population. Although further arms deliveries will lead to a prolongation of the war with even more dead and seriously wounded and even more destruction and devastation, they will not result in a victory for the Ukrainian army in the sense of the Zelensky Decree.

The Zelensky Decree prohibiting negotiations with Russia as long as there is still a Russian soldier on Ukrainian soil (including Crimea) must be repealed so that peace negotiations can begin without further delay.

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)