

The speech that could not be delivered: What WSWS spokesman planned to tell Berlin rally

The Editorial Board
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On March 23 Ulrich Rippert, the national secretary of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party) of Germany and a member of the World Socialist Web Site International Editorial Board, was scheduled to speak at the Berlin rally against the Iraq war held at the Brandenburg Gate. Two days previously, a meeting of the organisation Axis for Freedom had agreed that Rippert would address the rally as a representative of the WSWS. Axis for Freedom organised Saturday's demonstration in collaboration with the Attac movement.

Shortly before the rally was due to begin, an executive member of Attac denied Rippert the right to speak. He did so on overtly political grounds, citing the leaflet that was being distributed by WSWS supporters ["Build an international working class movement against imperialist war"] and saying it did not correspond to the political views of Attac.

The Attac spokesman said it was "irresponsible" to compare the US invasion of Iraq with the 1939 Nazi blitzkrieg against Poland, and complained that such a comparison would discredit Attac if it were made from the platform of the demonstration. "It would also send a completely wrong signal to the US," the Attac official added.

We are publishing below the speech that Rippert had prepared and would have made to the 40,000-strong Berlin rally were it not for the political censorship carried out by Attac. Tomorrow we will post an open letter to Attac from the WSWS International Editorial Board.

Dear friends,

I bring you solidarity greetings from the Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*. The WSWS is a daily Internet newspaper in nine languages, whose main editorial offices are based in the US. Today we are

distributing in many countries a joint appeal that brings together the broad international movement against war and the struggle against unemployment and the destruction of working people's past social gains.

The terror bombing of Baghdad has led to outpourings of disgust, anger and outrage. Nevertheless, it is important that we keep a clear head and seriously address a number of issues.

First: this war is not just directed against the people of Iraq. It is directed against the vast majority of the world's population, whose opposition to war has been clearly expressed at rallies and demonstrations held across the globe.

Second: by all of the rules of international law, this war is illegal. It is a war of aggression conducted against the express will of the majority of UN states. A small country—patently inferior in terms of military power—is to be reduced to ruins on the grounds that it violated a UN resolution. In fact, the aggressor in this war has not only ignored the relevant UN resolution, it has defied the United Nations and openly flouted international law.

When one sees the pictures of Baghdad in flames and hears how the American military justify their strategy of "Shock and Awe," the comparable historical parallel that comes to mind is the blitzkrieg carried out by the Nazis against Poland in 1939.

Never since the coming to power of the Nazis in this country 70 years ago has a government confronted the world community in such an arrogant and brutal manner, while trampling international law underfoot.

Over the past weeks there has been much talk of weapons of mass destruction, but now it is clear who has and is using such weapons.

The realisation that this war violates international law has far-reaching implications for the German

government. On the basis of current German law, since this war has not been legitimised by the United Nations, the German government has no legal basis for making German airspace or US bases in this country available for the aggressive aims of the American military in Iraq.

This, however, is precisely what the German government is doing. Moreover, instead of withdrawing its Fuchs-type tanks from Kuwait, it has decided to reinforce their numbers.

On Thursday, as the war began, the parliamentary fraction of the Green Party expressly confirmed its support for the use of airspace and bases by the US military in Germany. In so doing, this party joins the Social Democrats as accomplices in the US-led war.

We call for the immediate closure of American bases in Germany and the denial of all rights to airspace for the US and British air forces.

Much has already been said about the causes of the war. It is bound up with control over some of the most important oil and energy reserves in the Middle East. The US government is determined to establish a position of hegemony throughout the world. The French and German governments are not prepared to go along, because they have their own Great Power interests in the Middle East and beyond.

I want to address another reason for the war that is perhaps not quite so apparent. At the moment, as the war begins, the US government appears to be extraordinarily strong. In reality, America is beset by a deep economic and social crisis for which the Bush government has no solution—apart from terror and war.

Yesterday over a thousand opponents of the war were arrested by police in several American cities. This president, who failed to secure a majority of the vote, is conducting himself with ever-greater aggression against his own people.

He represents the interests of a tiny elite that lives in luxury while the broad masses in America are threatened with a descent into poverty. This war is a desperate attempt by the American elite to stem the opposition growing among its own people, divert public attention from the crisis at home, and avert a social explosion.

The terror bombing of Baghdad has produced a sense of shock, but it also contains important political lessons. Baghdad in flames has made clear for all time

that war cannot be prevented by protest alone—even if that protest is many-million-strong and organised on a world scale.

It is necessary to develop a new political strategy. In doing so, there are just two possibilities.

One can side with the German and other European governments. But this will not put an end to war. In the first place, the reaction of these governments is to step up their own programmes of rearmament and prepare for the next, even bigger conflict with the US over the shape of the new world order. Secondly, the governments in Europe are conducting their own offensive against the working class and its past social gains.

The only realistic strategy against war must base itself on the political mobilisation of the great majority of the working population on both sides of the Atlantic. This requires, however, bringing together the issue of war with the struggle against unemployment and the destruction of the welfare state—and that means a struggle against this government.

Instead of uniting with the German government or other European governments against the US, we strive to unite the broad masses of American and European workers.

One last word: Yes, we are angry and disgusted with this brutal, unjust and cowardly war. But it is not enough to denounce and rage against the political and moral irresponsibility of others—in this case, the American government. It is necessary to recognise one's own political responsibility.

It is necessary to transform the protest against this war into a systematic political struggle to establish a society that elevates the interests of the population as a whole above the profit requirements of big business. This is the struggle being conducted by the *World Socialist Web Site*.



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