

The crisis in Ukraine and the return of German militarism

Johannes Stern
15 April 2014

Russia has warned the pro-Western regime in Kiev against mounting military operations against anti-government protests in eastern Ukraine, unleashing a new wave of anti-Russian warmongering in Berlin.

Even before the special session of the UN Security Council called by Russia, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble accused Moscow of “fomenting the unrest in Ukraine,” and threatened, “Russia must know that the West is not to be blackmailed.”

Social Democratic Party (SPD) Chairman and Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel went even further. He used a commemoration of the First World War in Berlin’s French Cathedral to stir up hatred against Russia. Together with French Prime Minister Manuel Valls, he accused Moscow of placing in question “fundamental political values.”

Russia was “clearly prepared to let tanks roll over European borders,” he said, adding that Moscow “has returned to the spirit of nationalist power politics” that led to the First World War a century ago.

What an absurd distortion of reality! The truth is, 100 years after the beginning of the First World War and 75 years since the outbreak of the Second World War, it is Germany that has returned to an aggressive foreign policy, threatening a military confrontation with Russia, a nuclear power, and a Third World War.

Berlin, working closely with the United States, organised a putsch in Ukraine led by fascist forces that brought to power a pro-Western regime, which is driving Ukraine into a civil war and provoking a confrontation with Russia. Now, the German media is seeking to depict Russia as the aggressor, using the most brazen lies and distortions.

The media accuses Moscow of doing precisely what the West did in Kiev only a few weeks ago: instigating anti-government protests. While the Western media

glorified the fascist putsch against the elected government of Yanukovich as a “democratic revolution,” now, without batting an eye, it is demanding the bloody suppression of the protests in east Ukraine and a more aggressive course against Russia.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* derides Russia in an editorial as a “warmonger,” and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as “chief cynic.” Russia’s role is “clear,” it says: Moscow is rolling over Ukraine from the east, creating “facts on the ground” and spreading “chaos, fear and disinformation.”

Clearly angry that the protests have not been crushed, the *Süddeutsche* asks: “Why did the [Ukraine] interior minister allow the 48-hour ultimatum, which he issued Tuesday to the occupations in Donets and Lugansk, to lapse? Where were the army and the militias over the past several days?”

In its editorial on Monday, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* went further, writing that sanctions against Moscow were “not enough,” and that the West must “support Ukraine more decisively than before.”

“If NATO and the EU do not now show that they are determined to resist the Kremlin’s aggression,” the newspaper wrote, “even if that costs something,” there can be “an even greater cost ... If the Kremlin is hoping for backsliding, it might be tempted to assault the three Baltic states.”

How is the aggressive war hysteria in the German media and political establishment to be understood? It is part of a systematic revival of militarism by ruling circles in Germany. The same ruling circles, banks and corporations that unleashed two world wars are seeking to reprise their heinous crimes.

The opening shot was fired by German President Joachim Gauck in his October 3 speech. On the Day of

German Unity, he provocatively declared that Germany was “not an island” that could abstain “from political, economic and military conflicts.” At the beginning of the year at the Munich Security Conference, he announced, together with Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen, an end to “the policy of military abstention.” In future, Germany would have to “intervene more decisively and substantially” in regions of international crisis.

Ever since, the Grand Coalition of the SPD and Christian Democrats in Berlin has ruthlessly implemented this policy, amid relentless warmongering from the media. As if the German campaign on the Eastern Front in the First World War and Hitler’s war of extermination in the Second World War had never happened, German imperialism is renewing its traditional “drive to the East.”

It is increasingly clear that the Ukraine crisis was deliberately provoked by the Western powers to be used as a pretext by Germany and its allies to rearm and return to an aggressive foreign policy. The defence ministry supports NATO’s military build-up against Russia, deploying ships and aircraft close to the Russian border and holding military manoeuvres there. At the same time, the German military, politicians and leading journalists are demanding the reintroduction of conscription and the procurement of new tanks and attack drones.

The return of German militarism is supported by all the parties in the Bundestag (parliament). The most aggressive advocates of this policy are those parties that once claimed to represent the interests of the working class or the program of pacifism.

The SPD marked the 100th anniversary of its support for World War I with Frank-Walter Steinmeier as foreign minister in the Grand Coalition cracking the whip for Berlin’s new great power politics.

The Greens, who have beaten the drum incessantly for German military operations abroad ever since they entered government in 1998, were active participants in the fascist-led putsch in Kiev. Now they are attacking the German government from the right. Their lead candidate in the European elections, Werner Schulz, alternately abuses the Russian president as a “criminal,” “aggressor” and “war-monger,” and calls for military action.

The degeneration of the Green warmongers is only surpassed by that of the Left Party. The former Stalinists and their pseudo-left supporters have dropped their pacifist pretensions just as the ruling elite is reviving its great power ambitions. Last week, for the first time, Left Party parliamentary deputies voted for a foreign military mission by the *Bundeswehr* (armed forces).

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) is the only party that opposes the return of German militarism and condemns the warmongering by politicians and the media, which is opposed by the vast majority of the population. The PSG, together with the Socialist Equality Party in Britain, is standing in the European elections to develop the struggle against war on the basis of the programme of socialist revolution.

We call on workers and youth to turn the European elections into a plebiscite against the warmongers and the return of German militarism. Cast a vote against war and build the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit and the Socialist Equality Party, the German and British sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, to mobilize the working class against war!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact