

The fight against militarism, war and the falsification of history

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6 May 2015

This speech was delivered by Uli Rippert, national secretary of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, Socialist Equality Party) in Germany, to the May 3 International May Day Online Rally, organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In Germany, a massive military buildup is currently taking place which can only be described as the return of German militarism. At the same time, there are systematic efforts to falsify history.

Seventy years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Buchenwald and all the other concentration camps, the crimes of the Nazis are being relativized and whitewashed.

In the media and at universities, it is claimed that this terror originated with the Russian Revolution, Bolshevism and the Red Army. The crimes of the Nazis were, therefore, an understandable reaction.

This falsification of history is directly bound up with the resurgence of militarism and great power politics. In order to prepare new crimes of German imperialism, its historical crimes must be sanitized and glossed over.

One year ago, President Joachim Gauck and the German government announced the end of military restraint. They declared that Germany was too large and economically too strong to simply go on commenting from the sidelines of world politics. Since then, hardly a day has gone by without the demand for better weapons, better training of soldiers and more money for the army.

History has returned with full force.

The pace at which warmongering against Russia has escalated is breathtaking. German imperialism is using Ukraine—a country which it occupied in both world wars—to renew its advance toward Russia. To this end, the German government has collaborated with fascists from Svoboda and the Right Sector who uphold the

traditions of the Nazi collaborators in the Second World War.

In the Middle East, Germany has also stepped up its military presence. Unlike 2003, when the Iraq War began, or Libya in 2011, the Berlin government is now making sure that Germany will play a decisive role in the next round of violent carving up of the region.

The propaganda of the post-war decades, that Germany has learned from the enormous crimes committed by the Nazis, embarked on a peaceful foreign policy and developed a stable democracy, has turned out to be a myth.

German imperialism shows itself again, as it has historically developed, in all its aggressiveness, at home and abroad.

At the beginning of the year, the acquisition of new tanks, new combat helicopters and new assault rifles was announced. The U-boat fleet will be enlarged and, above all, combat drones will be purchased.

In February, a new military doctrine was announced.

The German army has taken over leadership of NATO's rapid deployment troops for worldwide operations. It is a leading participant in a large number of military maneuvers and plays an important role in the build-up of NATO in Eastern Europe and the encirclement of Russia.

At the Munich Security Conference earlier this year, the former prime minister of Sweden, Carl Bildt, declared that a war with Russia is possible. He added, "We are currently living through a very dangerous phase in world politics ... the East is burning, the South is burning. These fires are getting very close to us."

In other words, Europe stands on the brink of a nuclear catastrophe—much worse than the wars of 1914 and 1939.

Every party supports the drive to war. The Social

Democratic Party (SPD), and its foreign minister, have taken on the role of the whip.

They are supported by the Greens and the Left Party. These parties play a key role. Their special contribution consists of disguising the resurgence of German militarism behind phrases about “peace,” “democracy” and “human rights,” and suppressing any opposition to it.

The trade unions also support the war drive. Reiner Hoffman, head of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), praises the return of German great power politics as “forward-looking foreign policy.”

The DGB had already formed an alliance with the German army two years ago. At that time, the head of the union declared that not only the trade unions, but also the military, were part of the peace movement.

The media, the political parties and the trade unions constitute a real conspiracy against the population. Not a single one of them calls things by their real names and says that a war with Russia would mean a nuclear catastrophe.

Instead, the parties and trade unions, together with the army, are preparing a military celebration called “Armed Forces Day” next month. Hundreds of so called “youth officers” and “military careers advisers” will be sent into the schools to recruit for the army. In the style of Prussian militarism and the Wehrmacht, “soldierly virtue” is once again to be a role model.

One part of the military spectacle will be a tribute to Nazi officers who were instrumental in German rearmament and the formation of the Bundeswehr Federal Armed Forces after the war.

Millions of people are following the war propaganda and military buildup with a mixture of disbelief, shock and growing outrage.

To mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps, TV documentaries have been shown in recent weeks that make clear once again the full horror of the mass extermination of 6 million Jews.

The monstrous crimes of the Nazis are etched into the consciousness of large sections of the population. The demand, “No more war!” and “No repeat of fascism!” has shaped generations and remains alive up to this day.

In order to break this resistance, a concerted campaign is underway to rewrite and distort history.

Thirty years ago the historian Ernst Nolte relativized the crimes of Nazism and presented them as an “understandable” reaction to Bolshevism. He encountered strong opposition at that time and his thesis was rejected.

Today his revisionism is defended at history conferences and seminars and by leading universities, such as the Humboldt University here in Berlin, which is seeking to suppress any criticism of these historical lies.

But history is objective, and historical truth is a powerful political force. Anyone who thinks he can play games with history is very mistaken.

Nobody will be able to conceal the fact that the monstrous crimes of fascism, and the world wars that caused millions of deaths, were ultimately rooted in the contradictions of the capitalist profit system.

The return of militarism and war, which has shocked millions of people, reveals the real state of social relations. It refutes the illusions that democracy, freedom and social partnership are compatible with capitalism. It exposes the true character of all parties and trade unions. And in doing so creates the conditions for a revolutionary development of the working class.

The strength of our party is that we have never adapted. We are fighting tirelessly against the falsification of history, and for historical truth. We fight against every form of opportunism and nationalism, and for the international unification of the working class on a socialist basis.

This fight for principles is now winning a broad audience and is the source of our confidence and our optimism.



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