

German parliament threatens Russia with war

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On Thursday, Germany's parliament, the Bundestag, gave the green light for the delivery of heavy weapons to Ukraine.

The motion, with the cynical title "Defending Peace and Freedom in Europe," was jointly introduced by the governing parties—Social Democratic Party (SPD), Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP)—as well as the Christian Democratic (CDU/CSU) opposition, passing by 586 votes to 100, with seven abstentions. It is a barely veiled declaration of war on Russia.

The ten-page motion calls on the German government to "continue and, where possible, accelerate the delivery of needed equipment to Ukraine, including extending the delivery to heavy weapons and complex systems, for example in the framework of the ring exchange." The "ring exchange" refers to a process whereby Eastern European NATO members supply Ukraine with Soviet-era weaponry, which is then back-filled by Germany with ultra-modern equipment.

The motion advocates the "comprehensive economic isolation and decoupling of Russia from international markets." It states that in addition to "intensifying and accelerating the supply of effective, including heavy, weapons and complex systems by Germany," this is the "most important and effective means of stopping the Russian advance."

Accordingly, the German government should "follow up the embargo on coal decided by the EU as quickly as possible with an exit roadmap for Russian oil and gas imports," and "initiate a far-reaching exclusion of all Russian banks from the SWIFT international banking communication system." The motion adds that Germany should "further severely restrict economic relations with Russia and Belarus," and "consistently implement, selectively expand and tighten the far-reaching sanctions against Russia decided so far."

The Bundestag passed its declaration of war just two days after the US government held a war summit at Ramstein Air Base in Rhineland-Palatinate with representatives of 40 nations to plan the next stage of the escalation. The meeting left no doubt that NATO itself is the driving force in the war with Russia.

"The aims of the war are now clear," the WSWS commented in regard to the meeting. "The bloodshed in Ukraine was not provoked to defend its technical right to join NATO, but rather was prepared, instigated and massively escalated in order to destroy Russia as a significant military force and to overthrow its government. Ukraine is a pawn in this conflict, and its population is cannon fodder."

Meanwhile, both sides are with increasing openness considering the use of nuclear weapons. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and President Vladimir Putin have both made it clear that they will resort to this means if Russia feels its existence is threatened.

"If someone decides to intervene in ongoing events from the outside and create unacceptable strategic threats to us, they should know that our response to these coming strikes will be quick, lightning quick," Putin told Russian parliamentarians on Wednesday. He said Russia had "all the tools" for a quick counterstrike, adding, "We will not brag about them for long: We will use them if we have to. And I want everyone to know that."

The US is also stepping up its threats. They range from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's statement that the Ramstein meeting was called to "win" the conflict with Russia, to former US Army Commander in Europe Ben Hodges' announcement that the US was out to "break Russia's back," to discussions about the odds of victory in a nuclear war in the *Wall Street Journal*.

In that newspaper, Seth Cropsey, a former high-ranking official in the Department of Defense, published an opinion piece entitled, "The US should show it can win a nuclear war." In it, he suggests that the US destroy a Russian nuclear missile submarine, thereby reducing Russia's second-strike capability—that is, its ability to strike back after an American nuclear attack.

Instead of countering this dangerous spiral of escalation, which threatens to turn all of Europe and large parts of the world into a nuclear desert, the German government and the Bundestag continue to fuel it.

At the meeting in Ramstein, Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht (SPD) announced that the German government would now also supply Ukraine with heavy weapons and provide it with "Gepard" anti-aircraft tanks. Just four days earlier, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) had warned in *Der Spiegel* of a nuclear war and made assurances that everything would be done to avoid a direct military confrontation with the nuclear power Russia. Now he has cast his own warning to the wind.

The Bundestag has reaffirmed this dangerous course. Its decision is accompanied by a breath-taking falsification of history. To set German tanks in motion against Russia again, the responsibility arising from "our own history" is invoked. Germany "has a special responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that aggressive nationalism and imperialism no longer have a place in Europe and the world in the 21st century," the motion says. Accordingly, the

motion claims, the Bundestag fully supports Ukraine's right to self-defence.

It takes a lot of effort to fit so many lies into a single paragraph. The biggest imperialist power in Europe, which twice plunged the continent into a world war, is fighting "nationalism and imperialism" by allying itself with Ukrainian nationalists to wage war against Russia!

In fact, the Nazis, in their war of extermination against the Soviet Union—and before that, the Kaiser's imperial army in the war against Bolshevik Russia—had collaborated with Ukrainian nationalists who "unreservedly" advocated the independence of Ukraine, and in World War II participated in the genocidal crimes of the Nazis.

Today's rulers in Kiev revere these collaborators as heroes and have erected monuments to them. For example, the Ukrainian ambassador in Berlin, Andriy Melnyk, is an avowed supporter of Stepan Bandera, the leader of the fascist-terrorist Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which was responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of Jews, Poles and Russians.

Even after the Bandera biographer and historian Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe had described Bandera's crimes in detail in the latest issue of *Der Spiegel*, Melnyk publicly acknowledged his role model. In defending his admiration for the Nazi collaborator, he tweeted that Germans, above all, should "rather hold back with lectures on whom we Ukrainians should revere."

Elsewhere, the Bundestag resolution welcomes the "ban on broadcasting Russian propaganda channels." It does so on the grounds that "freedom of the press is central to the defensive capabilities of democracies." So "freedom of the press" prevails where one is allowed to listen only to the propaganda of one's own government, and that of the other side is suppressed!

The Bundestag's declaration of war is not a spontaneous response to the reactionary Russian war against Ukraine. It has been prepared over years. Back in 2014, when the US and Germany organized a right-wing coup in Kiev to install a regime dependent on them, a fierce campaign to revive German militarism and reinterpret history raged in Germany.

The government proclaimed that Germany had to once again play a role in foreign policy and military affairs commensurate with its economic weight. Political scientist Herfried Münkler relativized German responsibility for the First World War and proclaimed that Germany, as a "power in the centre [of Europe]," had to once again become the "taskmaster of Europe." Historian Jörg Baberowski proclaimed that Hitler had not been cruel and that his war of extermination had been forced on the Wehrmacht.

When Russia responded to the coup in Kiev by annexing the largely Russian-populated Crimea, Germany imposed the first sanctions. The Ukrainian army, which had almost completely broken apart after the coup, proved powerless at the time. Germany and France therefore negotiated the Minsk Agreement, freezing the conflict over eastern Ukraine—which is also Russian-populated.

In the meantime, the Ukrainian army was systematically rearmed. The Bundestag resolution boasts that Germany has "provided a good two billion euros in financial support" since 2014. "No country has provided more financial support to Ukraine

in recent years," it adds. How much of this has gone to military projects is not mentioned.

The reactionary response of the Putin regime, which reacted to NATO encirclement with war, is now being used to advance the militarist and imperialist goals of 2014, for which there is little popular support.

One day before passage of the Ukraine motion, the Bundestag debated the first reading of the special fund appropriation of 100 billion euros, which triples the defence budget in one fell swoop this year. Here, too, all parties pulled together, with the only disputes being differences over technical details.

In the debate, it became clear that the 100 billion euros are only the beginning. Defence Minister Lambrecht enumerated a long list of deficiencies for which funds were needed for maintenance and repair. For ammunition shortages alone, 20 billion euros would be required. Planned armament projects—including procurement of nuclear-capable F-35 fighter bombers—meant that the 100 billion in special funds would quickly be depleted, she said.

The Reservists Association is urging a doubling of troop strength. "With around 200,000 soldiers, the Bundeswehr is too small," association President Patrick Sensburg told the *Rheinische Post*. For national defence, he said, around 340,000 servicemen and women and 100,000 regularly exercising reservists were needed.

The Left Party and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), most of whose deputies voted against the Bundestag's decision to supply weapons, supported the government's aggressive course. Four AfD deputies even voted in favour of the motion, while three abstained.

The Left Party, whose votes do not matter at the moment, officially speaks out against arms deliveries in order to keep up appearances, while pushing all the harder for tough sanctions.

Thuringia's Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow (Left Party) told the *Thüringer Allgemeine*, "Before Russia turns off the gas tap, we turn off the money tap, step for step. Before Putin escalates, we have to escalate." The entire energy infrastructure that Russia owns in Germany must be put under trustee administration, he said.

The return of German militarism and the threat of nuclear war can only be stopped by an independent working class movement that unites workers of all countries in struggle against exploitation, war and capitalism. This perspective will be discussed by the International Committee of the Fourth International at its May Day rally this Sunday.



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