

May Day 2022: German imperialism rearms for World War III

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This is the report delivered by Christoph Vandreier to the 2022 International May Day Online Rally held on May 1. Vandreier is the national secretary of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei in Germany. To view all speeches, visit wsws.org/mayday.

I am very happy to be able to participate in this historic May Day and send the revolutionary greetings of the *Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei* (SGP, Socialist Equality Party).

Here in Germany, the class struggle is rapidly coming to a head. Hundreds of people are dying every day from COVID-19, completely avoidably, because the government is placing the most immediate profit interests before people's lives and health. Food inflation of 20 to 50 percent and soaring energy costs are decimating wages and increasing workers' anger.

"For what freedom should I freeze?" a worker asked us in front of a supermarket. "For the freedom to work longer and longer hours for less and less pay?" The more clearly the character of the proxy war becomes visible in Ukraine and the danger of a third world war grows, the greater the opposition in the working class.

After two world wars and the worst crimes in human history, anti-militarism is deeply rooted among workers in Germany. But the German government is once drawing on its criminal past and rearming for World War III.

Eighty-one years after the invasion of the Soviet Union, German tanks are again rolling against Russia. Tanks from former East German Army stocks have been delivered to Ukraine. The arms companies Rheinmetall and Krauss-Maffai are preparing to deliver modern infantry fighting vehicles, battle tanks and anti-aircraft tanks, all financed by the German government. Both companies had built tanks for Hitler's

Wehrmacht, exploiting and killing tens of thousands of forced labourers and concentration camp inmates.

This war machine is now being set in motion against Russia. The arms deliveries to Ukraine are only the beginning. Only three days after the Russian invasion began, Chancellor Olaf Scholz proclaimed a "turn of the times" and announced the tripling of Germany's war budget.

This means that Germany is spending significantly more money on armaments this year than any other European country, including Russia. It once again wants to become the most powerful military power and "disciplinarian" of Europe, as the right-wing Humboldt professor Herfried Münkler demanded in 2014.

The Ukraine war only provided the pretext for these horrendous rearmament plans. They were already worked out last autumn when the SPD, Greens and FDP negotiated their coalition agreement. The arms build-up of the century is being fuelled by deafening war propaganda on all channels. Newspapers and TV programmes outdo each other with unproven atrocity propaganda and revive the old anti-Russian chauvinism and sheer racism.

"All Russians are enemies," ran the headline of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. *Der Spiegel* published a page-long pseudo-historical treatise on why beastliness has been a part of the system among Russians for centuries, especially during the Second World War.

While Russians are portrayed as the spawn of evil, the crimes of German imperialism are systematically played down and relativised. For example, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is now routinely referred to by politicians and the media as a "war of extermination," a term previously used mainly for the Nazi war against the Soviet Union, which involved the extermination of

27 million Soviet citizens, planned down to the last detail.

This bestial murder machinery is now being equated with a war that does not even begin to bear such characteristics! Even when the German government supported the right-wing coup in Ukraine in 2014 and announced the “end of Germany’s military restraint,” this was accompanied by a rehabilitation of the *Wehrmacht* and the trivialisation of Hitler in the media.

In *Der Spiegel*, the right-wing radical professor Jörg Baberowski declared that Hitler was not cruel, and that the Holocaust was no more criminal than the shootings that occurred in the Russian civil war. When the IYSSE and the SGP countered this grotesque falsification of history, Baberowski was defended and celebrated by representatives of all *Bundestag* (parliamentary) parties and almost all media. Now it is crystal clear that this was not about a single professor, but about the basic tendency of German imperialism. The historical crimes of German militarism must be played down to prepare new crimes.

Last week, a commentary in *Der Spiegel* followed this path to its end, calling for history to be forgotten in order to finally be able to equip Germany with nuclear weapons. This insane policy of a nuclear world war is directed first against Russia, but it revives all the basic historical questions of German imperialism and also increases tensions with France, Britain and the US. It is supported by all the parties in the *Bundestag*.

The worst warmongers in this are the Greens. Not a day goes by without a party representative loudly banging the drum for further arms deliveries, for heavy weapons and even greater rearmament spending. The long-time head of the Green Party’s Heinrich Böll Foundation in Kiev, Sergei Sumlenny, even called for a nuclear war against Russia to destroy its threat potential.

The Left Party is also part of the war conspiracy. When Scholz announced his “turn of the times,” the Left Party parliamentary group largely went along with the government’s motion. Its foreign policy spokesman, Gregor Gysi, even wanted to agree to the €100 billion rearmament programme.

The complete bankruptcy of the petty-bourgeois pacifists comes as no surprise. They had advocated military restraint for as long as it was in the interest of

German imperialism. Today they are in the war camp with flags flying.

The *Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei* is the only party that opposes German militarism. We give voice and a socialist perspective to the deep-rooted anti-militarism among workers. That is why the ruling class of Germany is acting against us with all means.

After a veritable smear campaign was waged against us in the major media outlets, Google and Facebook censored us, the Secret Service put us on the list of “extremist organisations.” Just “fighting for a democratic, egalitarian and socialist society” and fighting against imperialism were declared anti-constitutional by the federal government. They do this not from a position of strength but of weakness. They do it because their incessant war propaganda, bearing in mind historical experience, finds no traction among working people.

Together with our comrades in the International Committee of the Fourth International, we opposed and defeated Facebook’s censorship of our anti-war video. And in the same way, we will beat back the attempts of the state to criminalise us. Because our party, the ICFI, represents something much stronger than the state apparatus with all its war machinery: the unity of the international working class.

Everything now depends on transforming the growing working class opposition to war and inequality into a conscious political force and building the ICFI as a world party of socialist revolution in every country of the world.



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