

Warmongering on the anniversary of German reunification

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For three decades, the anniversaries of German reunification have been used to drum up support for military rearmament and to spread German great power fantasies. For every class-conscious worker, the nationalist spectacle is a reminder of just what a reactionary development was initiated with reunification 32 years ago and how important it is to fight against the return of militarism and war.

Today, the ruling class is pushing ahead with its proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, accepting the danger of a global nuclear catastrophe. Seventy-seven years after the horrors of World War II, all the establishment parties are demonstrating their unity in sending more German tanks against Russia and escalating the war to complete military victory.

Bodo Ramelow of the Left Party made this clear in his speech at the official reunification ceremony in Erfurt. The Thuringia state prime minister spoke of an “imperialist war” by Russia and of Russian war crimes “on a scale for which it seems almost presumptuous to want to find words.”

This is the familiar atrocity propaganda, in which indisputable war crimes are exaggerated to such an extent that negotiation with the enemy seems futile. The Russian invasion is reactionary and brutal, but it does not come close to the massacres that the NATO powers carried out in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ramelow engages in this propaganda to justify NATO’s massive escalation of the war and, in particular, Germany’s participation in it. “If we are serious about democracy and the inalienability of human rights, we must help where we can,” he declared, also expressing his support for the extensive arms deliveries.

Bärbel Bas (Social Democrats, SPD), president of the Bundestag (federal parliament), also announced in her

keynote speech at the ceremony that she would “continue to support Ukraine to the best of our ability” in the war. Putin had attacked Europe’s peaceful order and was responsible for exacerbating poverty and misery, she declared.

That this propaganda is about nothing less than escalation to nuclear war was also made clear by former German President Joachim Gauck. In an interview with broadcaster ZDF on the eve of the celebrations, he had already demanded Germans must overcome their fear of a nuclear war—a fear, he said, that played into Putin’s hands and encouraged him to launch ever stronger attacks.

Gauck said, “The fear that is displayed here with us, in many cases also exposed by Putin’s threats, we don’t see it in neighbouring countries as we do here in Germany. And it is incredibly important that we realize that Putin is incorporating these German fears into his planning. It is an element of his warfare. That’s why we need a sober assessment of his threats and a very clear recognition that fear makes one shut one’s eyes and drives people to flee. And flight is what we cannot afford.”

There is no clearer way to sum up the ruthlessness of the ruling class. It is willing to put up with a nuclear world war. It preaches fearlessness before the nuclear annihilation of all mankind in order to achieve its imperialist goal: to subjugate and crush Russia.

This is the result of years of systematic escalation. As early as nine years ago, Gauck, in his capacity as Federal President, used the anniversary of German reunification to proclaim the “end of Germany’s military restraint.” Because of its economic power and geographic location at the centre of Europe, Germany bears a special responsibility for world politics, he declared.

In the future, he said, Germany should act as a global leader and also participate much more than before in war missions. “Our most important interest,” Gauck said, was to “preserve the political and military order, especially in confusing times, and make it fit for the future.”

A few months later, the German government played a leading role in the 2014 Maidan coup in Kiev, which—backed by fascist forces—toppled elected pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych and installed a pro-Western puppet regime. Since then, NATO powers have been arming the Ukrainian army and torpedoing any negotiated settlement with Russia.

In this way, the leading NATO powers provoked the Putin regime’s reactionary invasion of Ukraine.

Germany’s ruling class now sees the war against Russia as an opportunity to implement its long-cherished great power plans and to rearm the Bundeswehr to become the strongest army in Europe. Yet the war against Russia is only the preparation for a war against China and the complete imperialist redivision of the world.

When Gauck talks about overcoming fear in the face of this madness, he also has in mind the ruling class’s fear of the working class. The reunification that the former pastor cheered with his sermons did not lead to freedom and prosperity but to misery and the strengthening of authoritarian and fascist tendencies. The government knows that it is sitting on a social powder keg.

This has been further exacerbated by the war against Russia. Millions of workers are slipping into poverty and do not know how to pay their rent, heating and food bills. Hundreds of thousands are threatened with short-time working and layoffs as companies exploit the crisis to push through long-planned rationalization and restructuring. At the same time, the banks and corporations are once again being gifted billions in state aid.

This capitalist class politics is as hateful as militarism and great power politics. After the terrible experiences of two world wars and the Holocaust, the rejection of German imperialism and militarism is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the masses.

That is why the political establishment and the media keep public opinion under constant pressure. While Russian war crimes are used for atrocity propaganda

and exaggerated, the historical crimes of German imperialism are systematically downplayed and justified. While it used to be right-wing professors like Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski who relativized German crimes in World War I and World War II, this is now the official line of the German government.

“In order to prepare new crimes of German imperialism, its historical crimes must be sanitized and glossed over,” we commented back in 2015. Now, the rulers are not only propagating war from German soil against Russia again—they are agitating against the fear of a nuclear third world war, which would mean the end of human civilization.

The fact that the return of German militarism is supported by all Bundestag parties shows that such a catastrophe can only be prevented if the widespread opposition to war is transformed into a conscious political movement. Only an independent movement of the international working class can stop the madness and oppose capitalist barbarism with a socialist perspective.

This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International are fighting for. Read and share the WSWS statement “Stop the War in Ukraine!” and register now to join in building a new anti-capitalist antiwar movement.



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