

German parliament supports far-right war propaganda with “Holodomor” vote

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5 December 2022

November 30, 2022 will go down in history as the date on which the German parliament (Bundestag) sacrificed historical truth and the freedom of opinion and scholarship on the altar of militarism. It declared its support for a historical forgery that originated with the Nazis and in right-wing, historical revisionist circles.

The deputies passed the resolution 'Holodomor in Ukraine' with no votes against. It classifies the famine that affected the entire Soviet Union in the years 1932-33, as a “genocide” against the Ukrainian nation. The resolution claims that, 90 years ago, Stalin tried to destroy the “Ukrainian way of life, language and culture” through the “targeted and mass killing of people by hunger” (Ukrainian: Holodomor).

Extensive historical research has long refuted this claim. The famine was the result of a catastrophically wrong policy of the Stalinist regime, but not—like the Holocaust and the Nazis’ war of extermination—a conscious policy of mass murder.

The claim that Stalin deliberately organized a famine in 1932 in order to exterminate the Ukrainian nation stems from the arsenal of right-wing extremist falsifications of history, as Clara Weiss proves in detail in two articles published this week on the WSWs, “German parliament declares 1930s famine in Ukraine a genocide: falsification of history in the service of war propaganda” and “Timothy Snyder’s Bloodlands: right-wing propaganda disguised as historical scholarship.”

The claim was used by the Ukrainian fascists during the Second World War to justify their cooperation with the Nazis. It was advocated, among others, by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), led by Stepan Bandera, which collaborated with the Nazis in the war of extermination against the Soviet Union and the Holocaust and was responsible for the killing of tens of thousands of Jews, Poles and Communists. After the war, it was cultivated by neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremists and taken up by right-wing professors such as Ernst Nolte to trivialize the Nazis’ crimes.

The Bundestag has revived the historical lie of the “genocide” in order to justify the NATO war against Russia, which is increasingly being rejected by the population. Russia continued the Stalinist genocide in Ukraine and therefore must be combated by all means, one speaker after the other claimed in the debate. “The parallels to the present day are unmistakable. Again, a dictator in the Kremlin is trying to subjugate Ukraine and destroy it,” said Green MP Robin Wagnener.

Historians, journalists, teachers or ordinary citizens who contradict this “genocide” claim risk up to three years in prison. Two months ago, the Bundestag strengthened paragraph 130 of the Criminal Code accordingly. Since then, condoning, denying and trivialising genocide have been punishable. Presiding judges in incitement proceedings will be guided by the Holodomor resolution of the Bundestag. It will also influence the curricula of schools and faculties of history.

The fact that the Bundestag is committed to a far-right falsification of history and threatens dissenting opinions with imprisonment is an expression of the real character of the war in Ukraine. A reactionary policy requires a reactionary ideology, and war is incompatible with democracy.

The war in Ukraine did not begin with the Russian attack this spring, but years earlier. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO has systematically encircled Russia militarily, despite promises to the contrary. In 2014, the US and Germany organized a right-wing coup in Kiev, bringing a pro-Western regime to power. Since then, they have massively upgraded Ukraine. Its aim is not only to incorporate Ukraine, Georgia and other former Soviet republics into their sphere of influence, but also to subjugate and divide Russia with its vast mineral resources.

The Putin regime reacted to this with a reactionary military attack on Ukraine. Since then, NATO has been doing everything it can to prevent a peaceful solution, to escalate the war and to defeat Russia militarily, even at the risk of a world war fought with nuclear weapons.

All parties represented in the Bundestag stand united

behind this policy. This is why deputies from all parties reaffirmed the far-right narrative of the “Holodomor”: “Killing by hunger aimed at suppressing the Ukrainian national consciousness, culture and language.” (Robin Wagener, Greens), ‘It was an inhuman crime that was politically wanted, artificially induced and systematically carried out by Stalin and his henchmen.’ (Ulrich Lechte, Free Democrats), ‘They should die because they are Ukrainians. An entire people should die.’ (Michael Brand, Christian Democrats).

Marc Jongen of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) summed up the anticommunist and fascist character of the campaign. He did not stop at condemning Stalin for “one of the great crimes committed by humanity in the twentieth century,” but instead identified the true culprits in Lenin and in socialism: “If we remember this monstrous crime today, then the doctrine must be one thing above all else: Socialist ideology, with its hatred of individuality and freedom, with its terror of equalization and its delusion of being able to create a new man, must be rejected and combated wherever it raises its hideous head in a new disguise.”

Gregor Gysi (Left Party) also attacked Lenin. He explained that Lenin had completely misinterpreted Marx when he made the first attempt to establish socialism in completely underdeveloped Russia. Marx had argued that this was only possible in the most developed capitalist country. “Stalin then resorted to terrorist industrialization and forced collectivization, killing millions of people by starvation – a terrible crime against humanity,” added Gysi.

The Left Party and the AfD abstained in the vote – The Left Party, because it does not fully support the genocide thesis; the AfD, because it rejects “the equation of historical events with today’s war of Russia against Ukraine.” But both parties refrained from voting against the resolution and, together with the Social Democrats, Greens, Free Democrats, and Christian Democrats, supported the far-right narrative of the ‘Holodomor.’

An observer who followed the debate in the gallery of the Bundestag noted this with satisfaction – the deputy Ukrainian Foreign Minister and former ambassador to Germany Andrij Melnyk, an avowed supporter of the Ukrainian Nazi collaborator and mass murderer Stepan Bandera. On Twitter, Melnyk enthused: ‘A truly historic day in Berlin. The German Bundestag will recognise the #Holodomor as #genocide against the Ukrainian nation. ... We have fought for this decision for many years. Thank you, dear German friends, for this sign of justice.’

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) already warned eight years ago that “the revival of German militarism requires a new interpretation of

history that trivializes the crimes of the Nazi era” and the suppression of freedom of expression.

In February 2014, leading representatives of the German government, including the then-Foreign Minister and current Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, announced the end of Germany’s military and foreign policy restraint and put this into practice with the right-wing coup in Kiev.

At the same time, *Der Spiegel* published the article “Der Wandel der Vergangenheit” (The Transformation of the Past), which—based on the historian Jörg Baberowski, the political scientist Herfried Münkler and Ernst Nolte, who triggered the historians’ dispute in the 1980s with his apologetics for the Nazis—glossed over the crimes of German imperialism in the First and Second World Wars. Baberowski was quoted as saying: ‘Hitler was not a psychopath and he wasn’t vicious,’ and: ‘Nolte was done an injustice. Historically speaking, he was right.’

When the SGP and its youth organization, the IYSSE, publicly protested against these statements, the entire professorship, press and politics, with a few exceptions, stood behind Baberowski and denounced the SGP and IYSSE. When these gained broad support among students and workers, the secret service included the SGP as a “left-wing extremist” organization in its annual report, among other things on the grounds that it agitated “against alleged ‘imperialism’ and ‘militarism’” and believed “in the existence of irreconcilably opposed competing classes.”

It is now clear why this was done. The warnings of the SGP have been fully confirmed. The Bundestag parties not only defend a professor who spreads far-right historical lies, but also spread such lies themselves in order to justify a war that threatens to plunge all humanity into the abyss.

The Socialist Equality Party is the only party that opposes war politics on a socialist and internationalist basis. As the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, it calls for the construction of an international mass movement of youth and the working class against war.

We invite all readers of the WSWS to take part in the IYSSE’s online webinar to build a global anti-war movement on December 10th! Support the SGP’s campaign for the state election in Berlin! Become a member of the IYSSE and SGP!



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