

May Day 2025

# The fight against German militarism 80 years after World War II

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*The WSWS is posting here both the video and text of the speech by Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Germany) National Committee member Katja Rippert to the International May Day 2025 Online Rally.*

On behalf of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, I bring you revolutionary greetings on May Day from Berlin—from the city that was liberated by the Red Army exactly 80 years ago, in May 1945.

Over 13,000 Soviet soldiers are buried here at the Soviet Memorial in Schönholzer Heide in northeast Berlin. They gave their lives in the heroic struggle against the fascists. Soviet prisoners of war are also commemorated here. This site is considered the largest Soviet cemetery outside Russia.

Over 27 million Soviet citizens and 6 million Jews fell victim to the Holocaust and the Nazi war of extermination.

These are not dead figures from the distant past.

Eighty years later, we are witnessing the return of German imperialism to its predatory expansionist policies. Their hunger for raw materials, labor force and spheres of influence is driving the German elites into war against Russia for the third time.

They are using the Putin regime's reactionary invasion of Ukraine to justify the largest rearmament since Hitler. The Bundestag and Bundesrat have approved over €1 trillion in war loans.

Chancellor-designate Friedrich Merz wants to supply Ukraine with German Taurus cruise missiles that can reach Moscow. That is an extremely dangerous escalation. Who can guarantee that the Kremlin will not respond to the Taurus weapon with attacks on German targets?

Since the fascist Trump took office, Germany has

been pursuing its war agenda even more aggressively, without or even against the USA if necessary. The German government is responding to Trump's "America First" with "Deutschland über alles."

Behind the armament mania is the revanchism of the German ruling class. It wants to finally throw off the shackles of the post-war period and reach for world power once again. It conceals its geopolitical interests behind the lie that it is defending "democracy" against the Russian aggressor.

On the ideological front, history is being rewritten in order to whitewash German imperialism of its crimes. German academics relativize the Nazi war of extermination and the Holocaust and try to portray the Soviet Union as the actual aggressor and perpetrator of the Second World War.

Now the Bundestag has even excluded the ambassadors of Russia and Belarus from this year's commemoration of the end of the war. This affront is directed against the entire working class. There is hardly a family in Russia and Belarus that did not lose relatives in the terror of the Nazis or in the fight against them.

Day in and day out, German politicians and journalists are beating the drum to make society "fit for war" again. The incoming government of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) is planning to reintroduce compulsory military service, militarize universities and schools, build up a massive arms industry and switch to a war economy, social cuts and further attack refugees.

All capitalist parties support the war policy. The former pacifists and Greens are now the most aggressive warmongers. Even the Left Party, which

won 25 percent of young voters because it presented itself as an opponent of the right wing, has agreed to rearmament.

The costs of war are to be borne by the workers—through cuts in education, health and social services, mass layoffs and rising prices and rents.

But resistance has already begun—in the form of strikes, demonstrations against the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and protests against the genocide in Gaza.

While the government supports the genocide, opponents of war and peacefully protesting students are being beaten up by police, arrested and deported.

As in the 1930s, the ruling class is reacting to the deep crisis of capitalism and its fear of a social revolution by promoting the fascists of the AfD, which is now the strongest party in the polls.

In 1933, the political elites and big business brought Hitler to power in order to crush the strong workers' movement. This was only possible because the Stalinist policies of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) had divided and paralyzed the workers.

In National Socialism (Nazism), capitalism revealed itself in its most naked and brutal form.

Here in this area near the memorial, the Nazis built a forced labor camp in which over 2,000 people were exploited to the bone, including many Soviet citizens.

They toiled for the arms company Deutsche Waffen- und Munitionsfabriken AG, which belonged to the Quandt family—today one of the richest business families in Germany. The Quandts built their enormous wealth of over €40 billion and the majority share in BMW on the bones of up to 50,000 forced laborers.

For a long time, the Nazi legacy of the German capitalists was kept quiet. Now, arms companies such as Rheinmetall are once again revelling in their war profits.

But then, as now, the bourgeoisie is in a desperate situation. Its insane war course is an expression of its weakness. It is defending a social system that has long since become obsolete. It fears the seething opposition of the working class—the gravedigger of capitalism.

In contrast to 1933, it doesn't have a fascist mass movement today. The workers have not been defeated. Explosive struggles are yet to come. The anti-war mood in the working class is enormous. The two world wars are deeply etched in its memory.

Young people don't want to be used as cannon fodder. The majority of under-29-year-olds reject compulsory military service. Last year, 81 percent of young people expressed fear of war in Europe.

The crucial question is: How can the descent into barbarism be stopped?

1933 was not inevitable. There was a perspective with which Hitler could have been prevented: the unification of the workers' movement under a revolutionary leadership and with an internationalist program. The revolutionary Leon Trotsky fought for this against the Stalinist and social democratic leaders of the two workers' parties.

We must take up Trotsky's struggle today. War and fascism can be stopped if the great power of the international working class is mobilized.

For this, it needs a political leadership that has learned the lessons of history and pursues a socialist strategy. This perspective is represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.

I call upon you: There is no time to lose! Join our movement. Become active in the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and our youth organization, the IYSSE!



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