

German Foreign Minister Steinmeier's UN speech: War propaganda cloaked in pacifist phrases

By Johannes Stern
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German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier (Social Democratic Party, SPD) emphasized Germany's role as a great power in his speech to the United Nations in New York on Saturday. He combined threats against Russia with the demand for a massive military intervention in the Middle East and more German "responsibility" throughout the world.

Steinmeier cynically portrayed this aggressive foreign policy as a "policy of peace" based on the lessons of the wars and experiences of the previous century. At the beginning of his speech, he recalled "the summer one hundred years ago" when "the world sank into the First World War," and the German invasion of Poland in 1939, which "pitched the world into a Second World War."

Then he declared that the most important lesson of this history for him was the founding of the United Nations, which "embodies the hope for world peace." Its peaceful mission, according to Steinmeier, is to replace "the law of the jungle with the rule of international law." The UN solves "conflicts on the negotiation table and no longer on the battlefield" and brings about "peace by leaving the cynical logic of force behind it step by step."

The Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote the article "Hitler the Pacifist" ("Pazifist Hitler") in November 1933. He described how even Hitler invoked "peace" and "international understanding" at the beginning of his rule. Trotsky explained that the Nazi regime was "still too weak at the moment to speak in a language other than the language of pacifism." However, "in the course of a few years," when the regime had armed itself, "'my peace,' had turned into 'Mein Kampf' and then to 'Mein Krieg

(My War).'"

Steinmeier needed just 15 minutes to shift from empty phrases about "peace" to a call for "war" and German "leadership "(Führung)" in his speech in New York. First the references to "peace" turned into a "hope for peace." Then he asserted that the "foundation (of peace) is being threatened." It is "threatened by ghosts from the past and new demons. In 2014, our world seems to have been thrown out of joint. One crisis follows on the heels of the last," he said.

"And because that is the case," Steinmeier concluded, "calling on the UN does not suffice. Rather, we must bring this call to life! The hope remains a hope, an unreachable goal, when there are no countries that are ready to assume responsibility. The UN is not a forum to which we can pass responsibility—the UN is a forum through which we take responsibility ourselves!" Then he added, "Germany is a part of Europe and is ready to assume responsibility in and with the UN."

This is the cynical language of German imperialism. Nazi Germany quit the League of Nations (the precursor of the UN) in October 1933 in order to rearm itself and prepare for war. For the time being at least, the present government prefers to work within the framework of the existing international military and world political organizations.

About five minutes into his speech, Steinmeier abandoned the empty references to peace and commenced a tirade against Russia. He had to "address the conflict in the Ukraine in this regard," he blustered. Russia, "which is a permanent member of the Security Council, has unilaterally altered existing borders and

violated international law. We must oppose this dangerous precedent.” He opposed allowing “the force of international law to be hollowed out from the inside.” For this reason, he explained, Germany has “taken over responsibility along with its international partners and marshaled all its powers in an effort to defuse the conflict.”

It is not possible here to go into all of the lies and distortions packed into this single paragraph. The German foreign minister wishes to speak of German “responsibility” in the Ukraine crisis? Let us take a look at this claim.

In the Ukraine conflict, it is not Russia that is the aggressor, but the Western powers, Germany in particular. In February, after Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union, Berlin and Washington collaborated closely with fascist forces such as the Svoboda Party and the Right Sector to organize a coup. Steinmeier himself played a central role in these events. Just one day before the coup, he met with the Svoboda leader and infamous anti-Semite Oleh Tyahnybok in the German Embassy in Kiev. Svoboda not only maintains close connections with the German neo-fascist National Democratic Party (NPD), but also venerates Ukrainian Nazi collaborators such as Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, who participated in the mass murder of Ukrainian Jews.

With the current policies in Ukraine, Steinmeier and the German government establish their continuity with the war aims of the Third Reich and the Kaiser’s Empire, which sought in the course of two world wars to break Ukraine from the Russian sphere of influence and bring it under German control. Today, the German government is supporting the regime of oligarch Petro Poroshenko, which is carrying out a brutal civil war against the majority Russian-speaking population of eastern Ukraine. Its goal is not only to wrest Ukraine from Russian influence, however, but also to weaken and subjugate Russia itself.

Steinmeier’s speech left no room for doubt that the German government will use force to achieve its geo-strategic and economic goals. Moments after attacking Russia for its alleged violation of international law in Crimea, he promoted the aggressive war waged by the imperialist powers in the Middle East. Exploiting references to the atrocities

carried out by ISIS, he demanded a massive expansion of the war and in particular of Germany’s military role within it.

“Our answer must go far beyond the humanitarian and military measures that are necessary in the immediate moment,” he declared. “In both regards, Germany is making a considerable contribution, also militarily! But all that must be embedded in a political alliance against ISIS. My country expressly joins this alliance and I am sure that especially the societies in the Middle East are participating in the recognition that much more is at stake than just their security.”

Steinmeier concluded his speech with a barely camouflaged demand that Germany become a permanent member of the UN Security Council and that Russia’s veto right be restricted. “The United Nations is not finished,” he proclaimed. “Perhaps it will never be finished. It must continue to advance until all of its parts—including the Security Council—reflect the world of today.”

Steinmeier’s speech before the UN must be understood as a threat. If the German elites are permitted to determine the course of events, “the world of today” will come to resemble ever more “the world the way it used to be”—a world in which the “law of the jungle” prevails, conflicts are resolved on the battlefield, “the cynical logic of force” returns, and Germany once again makes a grab for world power.

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