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Europe's 9/11

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7 May 2014

In an interview Sunday in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, NATO General Secretary Anders Fogh Rasmussen compared the annexation of Crimea by Russia with 9/11 and the “war on terror.” This comparison says more than Rasmussen and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* perhaps intended.

For over twelve years, the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 have served the US government as a pretext for illegal wars and a massive buildup of its military forces. In the name of the “war on terror,” the US has attacked Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya; abducted, tortured and murdered suspected terrorists; spied on billions of people around the world; and built up the structure of a police state in America.

With the crisis in Ukraine, which they provoked, the ruling circles of Europe and, in particular, Germany, are embarking on a similar path. They are pursuing definite economic and geopolitical interests: pushing back Russia and expanding their influence in the Black Sea region, the Caucasus and Central Asia. They are also using the crisis to attempt to overcome deep-rooted popular opposition to militarism and build up the state apparatus in preparation for future class struggles.

Speaking to the newspaper, Rasmussen called for a massive rearmament by Europe's NATO members. "Stop running down your defense spending, turn the trend around and step by step invest more money in defense," he demanded.

"What has happened in Ukraine must be a wake-up call for Europe," he said. Russia had increased its defense spending by 30 percent, while some European NATO members had cut their spending by 40 percent.

The general secretary of the world's biggest military alliance threatened Russia with "serious consequences" should it further destabilize Ukraine or provoke a conflict with a NATO member. The Russians, he said, cannot "have the slightest doubt that we consider an attack on one member as an attack on all of us." He claimed that NATO's deployment of troops, combat aircraft and naval units to Eastern Europe was a policy only of "deterrence."

Leading German politicians immediately supported Rasmussen. The security policy spokesman for the Social Democratic (SPD) parliamentary group, Rainer Arnold, criticized NATO member states on the grounds that they had in recent years "lowered their military capabilities in uncoordinated fashion, driven only by financial constraints." This must end, Arnold demanded, insisting that NATO "ensure effective conventional deterrence."

Arnold suggested establishing multinational units and deploying them in Eastern Europe. The German army could "contribute its expensive special skills" and participate with its Tiger helicopter, the new Puma infantry fighting vehicle and the Boxer armored personnel carrier. The foreign policy expert of the Christian Democratic Union, Andreas Schockenhoff, agreed and added that in addition to providing armored units, the German army could help in preventing cyber-attacks and organizing naval deployments.

Washington and Berlin deliberately provoked the crisis in Ukraine, mobilizing ultra-right, fascist forces. The February 22 coup that brought to power the government of President Turchynov and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk was directed by Washington and Berlin, with the fascists of Right Sector and Svoboda playing leading roles.

The Western imperialist powers expected the unelected regime in Kiev to encounter popular opposition and provoke a Russian reaction. In a country where 6 million were killed during the Nazi occupation—including 1.5 million Jews—a government glorifying Nazi collaborators such as Stepan Bandera would inevitably provoke deep disgust.

The recent massacre in Odessa makes clear the barbaric character of the forces being mobilized by imperialism. Right Sector goons and other supporters of the Kiev regime torched the Odessa Trade Unions House on May 2, where hundreds of opponents of the regime had sought refuge. Dozens died in the blaze, and many were seriously injured as they tried to escape the flames by jumping out of windows. On the ground, the fascists cheered and hooted with glee. According to

some reports, many of the victims were murdered by right-wing militias before the fascist mob set the building on fire.

The spineless and unscrupulous German media has taken up the job of covering up these facts, while depicting Russian President Putin as responsible for the escalation of the crisis.

The more evidence emerges demonstrating that the Kiev regime is rejected by large sections of the Ukrainian population, the more bizarre the media's attempts to turn reality on its head.

On Monday, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* warned its readers “not to lose sight of the fact that Moscow is carrying out its undeclared war against Ukraine by stoking up and manipulating real conflicts in Ukrainian society on social issues as well as over linguistic, cultural and historical questions.” The conflicts are real, indeed, but they are being inflamed above all by the aggressive intervention of the Western powers, not Russian manipulation.

Rasmussen's comparison of the crisis in Ukraine with 9/11 is a warning to workers across Europe. It shows that the provocative actions of the Western powers are directed not only against the Ukrainian working class and Russia, but against the entire European working class. They are to provide the pretext for a massive military buildup, for war, and for the establishment of a police state.

Rasmussen is an expert in this respect. He is the author of a book tellingly entitled *From Social State to Minimal State*. During his period as prime minister of Denmark, a country once famous for its tolerance, he transformed the country into a fortress against foreigners. Under his leadership, Denmark was one of the few European countries to send troops to Iraq in 2003.

We appeal to all those seeking to oppose war and militarism to support the European election campaign of the Socialist Equality parties in Germany and Britain and build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Europe. It is the only political tendency to consistently oppose war and militarism.