

# German media beats the drum for war against Syria

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The alleged poison gas attack against Syrian civilians is serving as a pretext for a war planned long in advance. This was made clear by a cynical comment by Stefan Cornelius in the Monday edition of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Although there has been no evidence presented to back claims that the Syrian government carried out the attack, and though there are numerous reasons to think that the rebels backed by Western powers are behind the attacks, Cornelius demands: “President Obama must intervene now.” The old logic “endure, keep out” could no longer be maintained, he writes. The use of poison gas requires the immediate use of military force.

Cornelius then poses the question, “Is it really decisive who deployed [the poison gas]?” He then replies: “Not really. ... Realistically, it makes little difference who fired the shells.”

The shamelessness of this war propaganda is staggering. Cornelius writes that it is irrelevant whether the Assad regime (which had just let UN inspectors into the country to verify the use of chemical weapons) carried out the gas attack, or the so-called rebels who maintain close links with the governments in London, Paris, Berlin and Washington and have a vested interest in providing a pretext for a NATO military intervention.

The main thing is that there is now a reason for war, which commits the “international community” (i.e. imperialist powers) to intervene militarily. This is the content of Cornelius’ comment.

Such bellicose tones have been rare in the German press, especially in papers such as the *Süddeutsche*, which often refers to its own supposedly liberal and independent political orientation. The paper supported the western led wars against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya and Mali, but was more restrained in its

approach, well aware of the unpopularity of such military interventions.

The bluntness with which the paper now beats the drum for war against Syria reflects the political transformation within the ruling elite, which includes the government and all opposition parties. Faced with a deepening crisis of the world economy, increasing international tensions and growing class conflict, they are tossing aside any pretense of pacifism in favor of traditional great power politics.

Bearing in mind the current election campaign, the chancellery and foreign ministry waited a day’s time before speaking out for action against Syria. The supposedly liberal media on the other hand clamored for war from the start.

Similar comments to that in the *Süddeutsche* could be found in many other papers. *Spiegel Online* published a comment by Severin Weiland and Matthias Gebauer under the headline, “Merkel cannot look away.” It begins: “Germany and the Merkel government must take a stand. If the UN inspectors confirm the use of chemical weapons, there cannot be an abstention, as in the case of Libya.” *Tagesspiegel* and *Zeit.de* wrote jointly that Germany confronts in Syria “a life and death foreign and security challenge, demanding resoluteness, reliability to its partners and German influence in the world.”

The commentary in *Zeit.de*, which is close to the Social Democratic Party, criticizes “the feel-good Chancellor” who has been reluctant to speak out on behalf of “a military response from the West.” If “the economic power in central Europe” wants to “fulfill its foreign policy responsibility” then it had to “support a reaction that shows Assad his limits.”

“Only he or she who now signals to the main NATO partners their willingness to act, can then influence

their decision,” *Tagesspiegel* and *Zeit.de* declare.

Gone is all the talk about “human rights,” “humanitarian missions” and the other terms that have dominated German war propaganda since the war against Yugoslavia in 1999. Instead there is increasingly reference to “responsibility,” “interests” and “influence.”

The ruling class is of the opinion that the time is ripe to revive the German tradition of militarism and great power politics. The comment cited above from the *Süddeutsche* begins: “It may sound cynical, but, of course, military interventions are decided on the basis of a cost-benefit principle.”

This resurgence of German power politics and militarism is of international importance. Next year marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, which was largely the responsibility of German imperialism. The war was preceded by 15 years of intense imperialist and militarist propaganda. Two decades later, following the handover of power to Hitler, this war propaganda assumed hysterical forms until German troops finally turned all of Europe and large parts of the world into an inferno.

The fact that the German media and political parties now join the war propaganda against Syria shows that the imperialist class interests of the German bourgeoisie far outweigh any lessons they have drawn from their past crimes. Only an international socialist movement of the working class can overcome the threat of war and its root cause, capitalism.



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