

German media seeks to paint Putin as new “Hitler”

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On Wednesday, Germany’s *Bild* newspaper published an interview with the Ukrainian politician and oligarch Yulia Tymoshenko, who is being treated in a Berlin hospital. Asked what she thought about a recent speech by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Tymoshenko said Putin had delivered remarks “the like of which the world has not heard since 1938”.

Putin represented “unfiltered fascism”, which was even more dangerous than [Hitler’s] National Socialism because “he camouflaged it with phrases about friendship between peoples”, Tymoshenko said. Putin wants to “redraw the map of the world through wars, mass murder and blood”. This would become Putin’s “*Mein Kampf*”.

The fact that the top-selling daily newspaper in Germany—with nearly 2.5 million daily sales and a reach of over 12 million readers—is spreading such propaganda says a lot about the political depravity in its editorial offices.

Apart from the business daily *Handelsblatt*, which wrote that Tymoshenko’s statements raised “doubts about her state of mind”, no one in the world of German politics and media has rejected her Putin-Hitler comparison.

The general opinion in the German establishment is that it is permissible to falsify the historical context and facts as desired. In the eyes of the propagandists for German militarism, the veracity of statements is irrelevant, as long as their political content is correct. It is this reckless distortion of historical truth, and not the behaviour of Putin, that is reminiscent of the time when Nazi publications like the *Völkische Beobachte* and Goebbels’ rag *Der Angriff* spread grotesque lies and inflammatory articles, with no one daring to oppose them.

Tymoshenko’s remarks are such a trivialization of

Nazism that, on the basis of the laws of Germany, the state prosecutor should investigate them. According to paragraph 130 of Germany’s Penal Code, if someone “denies or renders harmless an act committed under the rule of National Socialism”, such as genocide or crimes against humanity, it is punishable by up to five years imprisonment or a fine.

Tymoshenko equates Russia’s annexation of Crimea, which was based on a clear vote by Crimean residents, with Hitler’s war of destruction against the Soviet Union, in which 20 million Soviet citizens were killed, including millions of Jews, communists and partisans who were mercilessly butchered, many in Ukraine.

If this comparison is not a trivialization of Nazism in the style of the worst Holocaust deniers, then what is? It makes clear the mind-set of Tymoshenko, who has been praised in the Western media for years as an icon of Ukrainian democracy. Not coincidentally, her right-wing Fatherland Party has just formed an alliance with the fascist party Svoboda for the planned elections in May.

German industrialists financed Hitler, and President Paul von Hindenburg appointed him as chancellor in January 1933 because he promised the capitalist ruling class two things: First, to smash the organized working class once and for all, and second, to wage a war against the Soviet Union.

With its Eastern campaign, Hitler’s *Wehrmacht* seamlessly followed the war aims of the German Reich during the First World War. During the early war, the German government sought to stoke an insurgency in Ukraine in the fight against Russia. Berlin supported Ukrainian opposition groups to bring a pro-German government to power in Kiev by means of an uprising.

The Nazis then continued this policy of conquest under the slogan “Lebensraum im Osten” (“living

space in the East”). Once again, Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union, served as a staging area against the Russian heartland. Once again, Germany sought to bring the vast acreage of farmland and natural resources of the Ukraine into the service of its war economy. Once again, it relied upon the support of local collaborators.

A central role was played by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) of Stepan Bandera, who is now revered by Svoboda as a model and hero. The collaboration between Bandera and the Nazis also extended to the Holocaust. On June 30, 1941, before the invasion of regular German troops, the wing of the OUN in the city of Lviv lead by Bandera carried out a massacre in which about 7,000 communists and Jews were killed.

Now we are witnessing the third attempt of German imperialism to acquire “Lebensraum”, in other words, to secure markets and sources of raw materials in the East. Mindful of the crimes of the past, this new offensive is camouflaged behind talk about democracy and freedom, and in close cooperation with the EU and NATO allies.

But notwithstanding all propaganda to the contrary, the expansion of German influence in the East is again based upon close collaboration with fascist parties. This includes Svoboda, which is celebrated by the fascist German National Party (NPD) as “one of Europe’s most significant right-wing parties,” closely linked politically and organisationally with the British National Party (BNP), Hungary’s Jobbik, Italy’s Fiamma Tricolore and France’s National Front (FN). In May last year, the NPD faction in the Saxony state legislature received and entertained a delegation from Svoboda.

Ten years ago, when Oleh Tiahnybok took over the leadership of Svoboda, he told his supporters in a speech, “Grab the guns, fight the Russian pigs, the Germans, the Jew-pigs and other vermin. Fight for our Ukrainian homeland!”

These are the allies of the German government. By his own account, the German ambassador in Kiev met with Tiahnybok several times in the past year, and the Christian Democrat affiliated Konrad Adenauer Foundation invited Svoboda members on “study tours” in Berlin.

At the beginning of the year, Svoboda was the most

important political force at the Maidan (Independence Square) protests. Its fascist thugs played a key role in the overthrow of the government and in organising the right-wing putsch in Kiev. In return, three of its leading cadre were given influential government posts.

Yulia Tymoshenko knows these facts very well. Her Fatherland Party differs only slightly from those professing fascist and anti-Semitic views. Her electoral alliance with Svoboda was struck in close consultation with the German government.

Tymoshenko’s bizarre interview with *Bild* hides the fact that the German government is collaborating with fascist parties in order to push through massive social attacks, and to enforce Berlin’s imperialist interests by military force if necessary.

It is high time to oppose this development. This is the importance of the participation of the *Partei für Soziale Gleichheit* (PSG) in the European elections. The PSG is seeking to mobilise the working class together with its sister party in Britain, the Socialist Equality Party, on the basis of an international socialist programme.



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