

The German media and the massacre in Odessa

Peter Schwarz
6 May 2014

A politically conformist media has long been considered a characteristic of dictatorships. Not any more. One can also speak of such a conformist press in the coverage of Ukraine in the German media.

Last Friday, over 40 opponents of the Kiev regime fell victim to a fascist massacre. Although German television stations and newspapers have many correspondents on the ground, you will not find a serious report concerning the background to this terrible crime. Instead, the events are falsified, downplayed or simply ignored.

From the outset it was clear that the victims who lost their lives, burning to death in the Odessa trade union hall, suffocating or jumping out the window, were opponents of the government in Kiev. Despite this, the media has deliberately left the origins of the victims and the culprits in the dark.

On the day of the events, *Spiegel Online* reported untruthfully that dozens of people had “died in clashes between Ukrainian nationalists and pro-Russian activists.”

Two days following the massacre, the *Frankfurter Rundschau* reported: “Violence escalated in the port city on Friday between hundreds of supporters of the government in Kiev and Moscow. In street battles, both sides threw Molotov cocktails, a trade union building was set alight. Four people died in the fighting, a further 38 lost their lives in the probably deliberate fire.”

To date, there has still been no word on the website of the *Rundschau* about who started the fire in the union hall and who was killed as a result. And this is despite the fact that the date of the fire alone—May 2—should surely have brought to mind dire memories in the editorial offices. On May 2, 1933, the Nazis stormed trade union buildings in Germany and murdered or

arrested numerous union leaders.

The events in Odessa do not conform to the flood of propaganda pumped out daily by the *Rundschau* and other media. According to their narrative, the regime in Kiev stands for “western values” and “democracy”, while the opposition is being directed by Russian agents and Putin personally.

That is a lie, as even the Ukrainian interim president Alexander Turchynov had to angrily admit. He agreed that his government is meeting with widespread rejection in the east of the country.

“Let’s be honest”, Turchynov told the Kiev broadcaster *TV5*, “the citizens in this region support the separatists, they support the terrorists, which has considerably impeded the anti-terror operation”. He said the fact that the police also sympathised with the pro-Russian forces was a “colossal problem”.

Because it is rejected by broad layers of the population, and even by sections of the security apparatus, the putschist regime in Kiev rests on murderous fascist gangs in order to defend its power. Far-right militias such as the “Right Sector”, the so-called “self-defence” of the Maidan, and members of *Svoboda* brought the regime to power on February 22. The same forces are now responsible for the murder of dozens of their opponents in Odessa.

According to reports of local activists, members of these militias travelled to Odessa last Friday under the cover of a soccer game between Odessa and Kharkov. They mingled with the football fans and marched through the city undisturbed by the police. It was here that the first bloody clashes occurred between about 1,000 armed fascists and 250 opponents who stood in their way.

The fascists carried on to the union building and set fire to a tent camp that had been built earlier by

opponents of the regime. The occupants fled into the union building, which the right-wing militias also set on fire. The grisly scenes of the burning union house, surrounded by jeering nationalists, in which regime opponents burned alive, died from smoke inhalation or jumped out of the window in panic have been captured on film. As have scenes showing the seriously injured being mistreated by the fascists.

The German media are deliberately hiding these facts from the public.

Like the *Rundschau*, the pro-Green Party *taz* has not said a word about the identity of the victims and culprits. Three days following the massacre, the online edition of *taz* reported: “At least 46 people were killed in a serious fire in the town’s trade union house and in street battles on Friday, with more than 200 injured.” The day after the fire, they said the fire was the result of “criminal arson”, citing the transitional government in Kiev.

On Monday, when the circumstances and background of the massacre were long known, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* asked, referring to the “chaotic situation” in the country: “Who can know who is concretely responsible for the rampage?”

The conservative *Die Welt* reported that at least 42 died “in clashes between pro-Russian activists and government supporters in Odessa”. Instead of naming victims and culprits, they cite the nationalist politician Julia Tymoshenko, who accused Moscow of trying to drive a wedge between the population and of being responsible for the deaths.

Germany’s public television broadcasters, subsidised with a monthly contribution of 18 euros from every household, and which are legally bound to report objectively, match the propaganda of the print media in every respect.

On Monday, the morning show on *ARD* provided extensive airtime to Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, who claimed the dead in Odessa were “provocateurs who acted on behalf of the Kremlin”. “This was a well-prepared commando action”, he declared. “It’s all part of the Russian plan to get its hands on Ukraine and destroy it. Well-trained agents initiated the conflict and then quickly disappeared.”

Although *ARD* correspondent Golineh Atai reported daily from Donetsk, nothing regarding the true background to the political events was explained. And

when the news anchors Thomas Roth and Caren Miosga ranted against Russian president Putin, they brought to mind the infamous Cold War propagandists of the 1960s, Gerhard Löwenthal on West German television channel *ZDF*, and Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler on East German television.

In response to the angry protests of their viewers, the news programme switched its editorials to their website, “as a result of overload”, they said.

The political conformity of the media is part of a fundamental change of course in German foreign policy. Faced with growing social tensions and a continuing crisis of the European economy, the German government has abandoned its previous military reticence and is again following an aggressive militarist policy. Together with the US administration, they have organised the putsch in Kiev and are now provoking a dangerous confrontation with Russia.

The media support this course. They have ditched all moral scruples and are helping through their lies to prepare future wars.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact