

Why is Stefan Kornelius so angry over the CIA spying scandal in Germany?

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In recent days, readers of the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* have rubbed their eyes in disbelief. On the opinion pages, repeated anti-American commentaries on the current CIA spying scandal have appeared under the byline of Stefan Kornelius, the paper's chief foreign policy correspondent.

Last Thursday, Kornelius gave free rein to his rage over the discovery of another suspected US agent in the defence ministry. He accused the US of "spying on everything and everyone, whether enemy or friend, from country boys to potential opponents." He called the spying "chutzpah" that showed "the arrogance of power" and called on Berlin to finally make "a political response to the infiltration."

In the Saturday edition a week before, in an article entitled "Destruction of an Alliance," Kornelius warned: "If it is confirmed that the American intelligence service had a double agent in the BND [German foreign intelligence agency], then Germany and the US will slide into a political crisis, the depth of which is difficult to exaggerate."

Kornelius sharply condemned the US decision "after the revelations from Edward Snowden and the outrage at the wire-tapping of the chancellor's mobile telephone ... to continue to operate in the same manner in the heart of the BND." This was "either stupid or insolent." Then he charged that US President Barack Obama either "did not have his agencies under control or is lying." Both were "unforgivable."

Kornelius concluded by demanding serious consequences for Washington. "The US now has to publicly explain why and under whose orders the partner German intelligence agency was infiltrated. After what has happened politically, this case of spying must have personnel consequences ... whoever is responsible for this damage, whether in Washington or

Berlin, must go."

Kornelius's comments are in such stark contrast to his customary pro-US propaganda that even the *New York Times* took notice. Kornelius, "normally an outspoken Atlanticist" according to the *Times*, is notorious for his defence of US-led wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. In recent weeks and months, he denounced Russia and called for stronger measures against the Putin regime. At the same time, he consistently defended the strategic alliance between Germany and the US, which he did not wish to see disrupted by anything, including spying by the US National Security Agency (NSA).

In previous comments on NSA spying, Kornelius spoke out against granting asylum to Edward Snowden and warned that his revelations should not be allowed to jeopardise the alliance with the US. Last November, he wrote: "So Snowden is demanding a political decision from Germany with major implications: for or against the US? Based on all historical experience, all interests of security policy, and all political reason, the decision cannot be made lightly."

The question is raised: why is Kornelius now responding so angrily? Why is he not downplaying US spying by referring to "Germany's strategic interests" as in the past, but rather demanding "serious consequences" for the US?

Kornelius's shift in rhetoric is directly connected to the deepening tensions in US-German relations. Leading German politicians, including Chancellor Merkel, President Gauck and foreign minister Steinmeier have reacted to the spying affair with an unusually strong criticism of the US. Last Thursday, Berlin even called for the highest-ranking US intelligence official in Germany to leave the country. While the Obama administration responded with frosty

silence, US media outlets spoke of the deepest crisis in US-German relations since the end of World War II.

Kornelius's complaint about the undermining of the alliance with the US also has a personal component. His career as one of the leading propagandists for US foreign policy in Germany has been based on the close strategic relationship between Germany and the US, which is now increasingly being called into question.

Kornelius is a member of or has close ties to a number of pro-US think tanks, including the Atlantic Bridge, the German Atlantic Society and the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies. In 2003, he won the Arthur F. Burns Journalism Award in the category "best commentary on US-German relations".

In terms of his ability to regurgitate the political line of the White House or Pentagon in the form of lead articles, he was perhaps outdone only by Josef Joffe, co-editor of *Die Zeit*.

These times are now probably over. In his recent commentaries, Kornelius comes across as an angry gambler who senses that he has backed the wrong horse. Not only will Kornelius's articles garner him fewer cocktail receptions and awards ceremonies on the other side of the Atlantic, but they will receive less praise and recognition from the German ruling elite.

An article in the latest edition of *Der Spiegel*, which openly questions the alliance and calls for more independence from Washington, states: "It is no longer cool to find America cool. A few years ago, the post of American ambassador was highly coveted. Now, in personal political terms, it is damaged goods."

With his angry change of course, Kornelius is also responding to the fact that his pro-US propaganda is meeting growing anger among the population. Over recent months, the media have been bombarded with outraged letters from readers due to their one-sided reporting of the fascist coup and civil war in Ukraine, as well as their anti-Russian propaganda.

When the ZDF comedy show "Die Anstalt" exposed the numerous connections between leading German journalists and think tanks before a broad television audience at the end of March and made the link with their pro-war propaganda, prominent journalists lost patience.

In an embarrassing Skype interview with the NDR magazine *Zapp* on May 14, Kornelius went on the offensive. Along with "Die Anstalt", he attacked the

dissertation of the Leipzig-based media studies academic Uwe Krüger. He had demonstrated how the relations of journalists with the pro-US and NATO milieu influenced their journalistic output. "Extreme left-wing blogs" and Wikipedia would now spread this information and attempt to "discredit" him as a journalist and "disparage" his ties, Kornelius complained.

He sought to defend his close network by claiming that all of the organisations he has contact with are "all honourable, democratic and extremely transparent organisations where foreign policy is discussed." He was merely there as a member to conduct "research" and earn his "daily bread." Clearly in an attempt to disprove the accusation of closeness to the US, he stressed that he is also a member of the German-Russian forum and that he travels "also to the Chinese and Indians and everywhere else."

Kornelius is certainly no expert at formulating his thoughts precisely. In the interview, seemingly without noticing it, he completely undermined his own pretensions to being an independent journalist. He also indicated that in order to earn his "daily bread," he may travel more in the future to Moscow, Beijing or New Delhi than to Washington or New York.

For the time being, Kornelius and other bourgeois scribblers and politicians have decided to adopt a stronger tone towards the US. His future orientation will ultimately depend on the course the German ruling elite steers as it tries to return to an aggressive and militarist foreign policy. It seems safe to say that, due to his on-the-spot "research," Kornelius will be excellently informed as to which way the winds are blowing.

As he explained in the interview, he also has close ties to the German Society for Foreign Policy, which is close to the government, and sits on the committee of the federal academy for security policy (BAKS), the leadership of which is decided upon alternately by the defence and foreign ministries.



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