

European powers seize on flight MH17 crash as pretext for war

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22 July 2014

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, in conversation with his French counterpart, François Hollande, compared the crash of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on New York and Washington that killed nearly 3,000 people.

The comparison reveals more about Poroshenko and his backers than the Ukrainian president intended. While there are obvious differences in the circumstances of the two events, there is nevertheless a clear parallel in the way they have been politically exploited and manipulated.

The US government used 9/11 as the pretext for a massive expansion of militarism and an unprecedented arming of the state. The “war on terror,” declared in the aftermath of the attack, was used to justify military force against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and other countries, along with the illegal practices of extrajudicial rendition, torture and targeted killings. The US built up a gigantic surveillance apparatus that spies on the US and world population.

This never had anything to do with protecting the American people from terrorist attacks. The “war on terror” was a gigantic lie—a political and ideological cover for the violent pursuit of imperialist interests and defence of the rule of the super-rich oligarchy, which has come into increasing conflict with the rest of the population.

The crash of flight MH17 is being used in a similar way to serve similarly reactionary political ends. Neither the cause of the crash nor those responsible and their motives has been established. Concrete information that has begun to emerge implicates the Ukrainian government, not the pro-Russian separatists.

Nevertheless, a torrent of deafening propaganda has been unleashed in the Western media and in Western

political circles to justify an escalation of the diplomatic and economic offensive against Russia and create the pretext for a further military build-up in Eastern Europe, with the ever-present potential for war between the nuclear-armed NATO powers and Russia.

Just over two months ago, the *World Socialist Web Site* pointed to attempts by the European media to portray Russia’s annexation of Crimea following the right-wing putsch in Kiev as just such a “European 9/11.” The crash of MH17 and the death of the 298 people on board are being seized on to accomplish what the earlier campaign failed to do.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, for example, writes that the crash of flight MH17 is an opportunity to break through the antiwar mood in Germany, which the war propaganda of President Gauck and the German government has been unable to shift. In a commentary published Saturday, Stefan Ulrich declares that flight MH17 “will produce a turning point and open the eyes of people in the West to the fact that they still live in times of war.”

Ulrich accuses the Europeans of “viewing the world idealistically to the point of naiveté today, following an extremely warlike past.” They tend to believe that “conflicts can instead be solved with good will and a lot of diplomacy.” Now, however, they can “take the drama in Ukraine as an occasion to think over their security and defense policy. Defense budgets cannot be allowed to sink any further. The EU countries must once again spend more for their security.”

Dominic Johnson, foreign affairs editor of the *taz* newspaper, which is close to the German Greens, cites the plane disaster to call for Western military intervention in Ukraine. He argues that Special Forces should be sent to the eastern part of the country “in order to secure the scene of the crime and salvage the

corpses.” Johnson calls this a “highly risky operation,” which does not prevent him from insisting on it.

The *taz* editor accuses Western governments of confining themselves to “helpless appeals to Russian President Vladimir Putin to ‘do more.’” This, he writes, is a “declaration of bankruptcy.”

The Western governments must do more, not least for the sake of their self-respect, declares Johnson. “The terror attack of September 11, 2001 in the US was immediately used to invoke the NATO mutual defense clause. The passengers killed on flight MH17 on July 17, 2014 deserve similar solidarity.”

The implications of this demand are staggering. Without flinching, the unofficial organ of the Greens demands the transformation of Ukraine into a new Afghanistan and the incitement of a military confrontation with Russia that could turn into a nuclear world war. It does so in spite of its inability to present any evidence that Russia bears any responsibility for the plane crash.

The pattern is the same. Horror over the tragic death of passengers on the Malaysian airplane is exploited, using unsubstantiated allegations, just as the shock over 9/11 was seized on to prepare much greater crimes.

This campaign must be rejected with contempt. Countless wars have been prepared by means of propaganda campaigns resting on half-truths and lies. There was the Gulf of Tonkin incident, with which the US justified a massive expansion of its intervention in Vietnam in 1964; there was the Ra?ak massacre, which has never been confirmed, but which provided the pretext for the NATO war on Yugoslavia in 1999; and, of course, the completely fabricated claims about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, by which the US justified its invasion in 2003.

Going back further in time, but closer geographically to the likes of Johnson and Ulrich, there was the burning of the Reichstag in February 1933, the event that served as the pretext for Hitler to consolidate absolute power.

If one considers possible motives for shooting down flight MH17, the regime in Kiev and its imperialist supporters should be placed first on the list of suspects. The plane disaster has provided a highly opportune occasion for these forces to bring governments that until now opposed a confrontation course with Russia onto their side, and to influence recalcitrant public

opinion. In Russia’s case, on the other hand, it is difficult to find a plausible motive.

Clear evidence of Kiev’s guilt is lacking, just as it is lacking for the separatists or Russia. However, such a suspicion is well founded. Even if the Ukrainian regime or the Western intelligence agencies that support it did not themselves order the attack, the Ukrainian security forces include fascist and criminal elements that are by no means entirely under the control of the government in Kiev.

In any case, for the Western governments and media, the victims of the crash are not what matters. The disaster is viewed as a useful basis for intensifying war propaganda. With their support of the February 22 putsch in Kiev, their collaboration with fascists in Svoboda and the Right Sector, and their alliance with oligarchs such as Poroshenko, Kolomoisky and Akhmetov, they have driven the country into civil war and produced the very conditions that could lead to an attack on a civilian plane. Now they react by escalating their warmongering policies even more aggressively.



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