

German media brays for war and dictatorship after Paris attacks

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Anyone reading the editorials in Germany's two major Sunday newspapers would find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris were welcomed by the German elites as an opportunity to push their right-wing agenda.

In articles bearing headlines such as "Into World War," "This is no longer terrorism, it is war" and "We cannot be subjugated, we have to fight," Berthold Kohler in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* and Stefan Aust and Mathias Döpfner in *Die Welt am Sonntag* called for war and dictatorship with an aggressiveness previously seen only from extreme right-wing circles.

Kohler, Aust and Döpfner are not fringe figures. They belong to the so-called "Alpha journalists" who have the deepest connections in government and security circles, and who used the Ukraine crisis to promulgate war propaganda against Russia and the return of German militarism.

Since 1999, Kohler has been one of the four editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and is a regular participant in the Munich Security Conference. Döpfner, the chairman of the board of Axel Springer SE, one of Germany's largest media companies, is a member of the Global Board of Advisors of the US Council on Foreign Relations and a participant in the notorious Bilderberg meetings. Aust was, from 1994 to 2008, chief editor of *Der Spiegel* and has been the editor of the right-wing Springer paper *Die Welt* since 2014.

In their articles, all three draw a direct parallel to 9/11. This comparison alone speaks volumes about the writers' reactionary political agenda. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the exact circumstances of which have never been clarified, were used by the Bush and then Obama administrations as a pretext to

wage illegal wars, push through massive military rearmament abroad and increase state powers at home.

In the name of the "war on terror," the US invaded Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). The NATO war against Libya (2011) and its stoking of a civil war in Syria devastated an entire region, killing millions and creating even more refugees. Worldwide, the US kidnaps, tortures and murders real or perceived opponents of its war policy, spies on more or less the whole of humanity and is building a police state in America.

Now, right-wing circles in German politics and the media are exploiting the shock over the terrible attacks in Paris for similar ends, which they have so far only been able to impose to a limited degree. They have two major aims: First, they want to push for the return to an aggressive foreign and war policy announced by President Gauck and the federal government. Second, they argue openly for the establishment of an authoritarian regime to break down the widespread popular resistance to militarism and arm the state apparatus in preparation for upcoming class struggles.

To advance their reactionary political agenda and make the public "ready" to accept war and dictatorship, the authors define the Paris terrorist attacks as an act of war, where the "shockwaves go even beyond those in the past," referring to September 11. They conclude that the supposedly "global war" (Aust) or "world war" (Kohler) requires extreme countermeasures.

Kohler writes that the events in Paris could "have serious consequences—for France, for NATO and thus also for the most important ally, Germany." The editor of the *FAZ* yearns for a more aggressive military intervention by Germany in the Middle East. "Merkel's dictum, that one must fight the causes of the wave of refugees in Syria, could suddenly experience an

unwanted change of meaning for her,” he declares.

Kohler combines his call for war directly with a plea for an authoritarian regime. “More than ever it is now a matter of the unity of the West. And consequently, that it demonstrates its will and ability to protect its values,” he wrote, adding, “Given the scale of the threat and the asymmetry of the conflict this will not be entirely possible without restrictions of the freedoms that are to be defended, if necessary, with our own troops in Syria. It will not be possible to win this epochal battle without sacrifice.”

He concludes his apocalyptic editorial with a barely concealed attack on German chancellor Angela Merkel, who despite her ongoing crackdown on refugees has long been regarded in right-wing circles as too “soft.” Prior to the Paris attacks, the Germans had “nothing against a friendly face at the head of their government,” Kohler declares, but in times like these “they want and need to see another: A hard one.”

Aust also attacks Merkel sharply and condemns “the humanity expressed in [Germany’s] welcoming culture” as “dangerous naivete.” He longs not only for a “hard” government, but places the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing to Germany from the consequences of Western war policy under general suspicion. “The security apparatus, kept on the back burner for years,” was “completely overwhelmed,” and open borders allowed “war to be exported.” No one could judge, “who, in the crowd of young men, are needy refugees or who are...violent Islamists.”

Döpfner goes even further in his rant against refugees. He speaks of “the refugee crisis” and “the wave of terror in Paris” in one breath, calling both “accelerants in a culture war that has long been smouldering.” His longing for an authoritarian regime to lead the “culture war” could not be more apparent. “The non-democratic regimes in the world are often virile and led more decisively, democratic societies are often weak, indecisive and hesitant,” he laments.

While “Russians, Chinese and most Islamic countries” know “what they want,” and also implement their aims, “most democracies...[seek] dialogue, compromise and above all the applause of their own people.” The consequence of this policy is “inaction in Syria. Hesitation in Iran. Looking away in the radicalised parts of Africa.”

Döpfner’s message is clear: to conduct war in further

parts of the Middle East and to act brutally against refugees requires deportations and immediate expulsions—which in turn requires an authoritarian regime. Specifically, the Springer chief demands a “policy of strength” that is to be enforced by “a radicalisation of the social centre.”

In Germany, the political content and the historical consequences of such expressions are well known. The last time the German elite embarked on a policy of the “radicalisation of the social centre” to pursue a “policy of strength,” it was followed by Nazi terror, the Second World War and the worst crimes in the history of mankind.

Döpfner, Kohler, Aust and the right-wing circles for which they speak have no significant support in the population, but their comments are a clear warning. In response to the deepest crisis of European and world capitalism since the 1930s, sections of the German elite are again willing to look to war, dictatorship and racism in order to defend the interests of German capitalism and imperialism.



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