

German media steps up anti-Russian agitation

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On Tuesday, virtually every leading German newspaper published denunciations of the Russian government, blaming it for stoking the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine.

The day before, the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin in especially harsh terms. Merkel's press secretary, Steffen Seibert, declared that the Russian and Syrian governments were responsible for the humanitarian catastrophe in the Syrian city of Aleppo. Russia's offer to set up a supply corridor for food, water and medication, and to guarantee a daily three hour ceasefire, was, in Seibert's words, "not good will, but cynicism."

"Rarely has the German government criticized Russia so sharply over the war in Syria," commented the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in its lead article. The paper supports the position of the German government.

On the opinion page of the same paper, Stefan Kornelius declared, "In Aleppo the world will witness crimes against humanity in which Russia is heavily involved. Moscow is fuelling a military conflict which triggers memories of the slaughters among the rubble in the Second World War." The "word of warning" from Berlin is welcome, but words "are never enough to bring a warring party to its senses."

Berthold Kohler made similar arguments in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The Kremlin is using America's restraint to dictate the course of events as a war party. The humanitarian catastrophe in Aleppo came as an opportunity for the Russian government. The "cynicism of Moscow" shows itself not only in Syria. The "declarations of the Kremlin in the Ukraine conflict are also soaked in lies, mockery and ridicule."

German foreign policy must show the Kremlin "that cooperation will work in its favour, not confrontation," wrote the associate editor of the *FAZ*. Then came a veiled criticism of German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier: "Some voices in the West, even German ones, were and are, however, likely to let Moscow assume the opposite." The "denial of reality and wishful

thinking" lurking behind all of this only encourages "Moscovite cynicism," Kohler declared.

On Monday, Steinmeier used his visit to the city of Yekaterinburg in the Russian Urals to discuss the latest escalation between Russia and Ukraine and the war in Aleppo with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

Following the discussion, Steinmeier said the "continuous hail of bombs" must stop. "That cannot and must not continue." He said he was disappointed by Russia's rejection of a sustained ceasefire, but wanted to resume discussions soon.

While Steinmeier helped to carry out the encirclement of Russia by NATO, he has attempted to keep open the lines of communication with the Kremlin so that they may also be used to apply political pressure to Russia. That is why he wraps the aggressive policies of NATO in diplomatic and restrained formulations.

This is a thorn in the side of some warmongers in the media, who demand even greater assertiveness on the part of German foreign policy. One typical representative of this attitude is Thomas Roth, moderator of the news programme *Tagesthemen*, whose one-sided, anti-Russian reporting leaves other media outlets in the shadows.

On Monday evening, Roth introduced his report on the Foreign Ministers meeting in Yekaterinburg with the words: "Naturally, talking is better than shooting." But all participants would have to want that, he added. In Yekaterinburg the Russians have already chosen shooting instead of talking, "just as Lenin's Bolsheviks shot and killed the Czar's family in July 1918," Roth continued.

Roth's piece was followed by an entirely one-sided report by Golineh Atai on the situation in Ukraine. The correspondent cited, of all people, the "Crimean Tatar activist" Ilmi Umerov as the principal witness to deny Russian allegations that the government in Kiev had carried out a terrorist provocation against the Russian-controlled Crimea. Umerov is an acknowledged opponent of the Russian government who in the spring was temporarily detained by the Russian secret service.

Two years ago, Golineh Atai delivered completely

biased reports on the putsch in Ukraine and the Maidan, protests presenting the events as a democratic movement despite the clearly visible participation of extreme right-wing and fascist gangs. The coverage of *Tagesthemen* was so one-sided that it was criticized by the programme advisory board of ARD, the service which broadcasts it.

In the last week, media agitation against Russia has clearly increased. On Thursday, *Spiegel Online* declared: “We dedicate this day to the war in Syria, the decisive conflict of our times.” The ruins and the dead of Aleppo are “a disgrace to the world,” they wrote. The people there are in a desperate situation, “Syrian-Russia bombs strike hospitals, hundreds of thousands of civilians are threatened.”

A dozen propaganda articles followed: “Aleppo’s doctors ask Obama for Help,” “Red lines, missed chances, lost lands,” “Doctors report new poison gas attacks on Aleppo,” and so on. Under the title “Obama’s successor will intervene more decisively in Syria,” *Spiegel Online* published an interview with former US Defence Department staffer Anthony Cordesman, who stressed that Germany must decide, “sooner or later,” whether it is ready “for serious, shared responsibility.”

On the same day, *Die Welt* featured the headline: “The West must finally stop Putin.” One week earlier, *Die Welt* had written: “Aleppo is even worse than Srebrenica.” The massacre of Srebrenica, in which thousands of Bosnians were murdered in the summer of 1995, played an important role in justifying the NATO war against Yugoslavia.

The “debate magazine” the *European* published in its August edition an article titled: “The war criminals axis of Moscow-Damascus-Tehran.” The magazine claimed that Russia, Syria and Iran are carrying out a “genocidal war with no regard for the consequences” and “the western world” had made itself an “accomplice to barbarism.”

With its warmongering against Russia, the media raises the threat of armed conflict between the two largest nuclear-armed powers in the world, a conflict which would claim millions of lives in Europe and possibly spell the end of human civilization. This madness is their response to the dramatic intensification of the international crisis of capitalism.

As in the 1930s, when the German ruling class appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany to suppress any social and political opposition and prepare the violent subjugation of Europe and the Soviet Union, Germany’s ruling class is once again engaging in militarism, building up the state apparatus and promoting

xenophobia to intimidate any resistance and to take part in the pursuit of raw materials and markets.

They follow the path of the United States, which is systematically encircling Russia and China and has destroyed large parts of the Middle East to defend its position as global hegemon.

The claim that Russia is “an aggressive and expansionist power” (*FAZ*) is a grotesque distortion of the facts. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union 25 years ago, NATO has advanced ever closer to Russia’s borders. Almost all East European states that were once allied with the Soviet Union, along with the former Baltic Soviet republics, have become members of Western military alliances.

The crisis in Ukraine was deliberately provoked by the Western powers. In early 2014, Washington and Berlin organized a putsch against pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovych in close collaboration with fascist forces and replaced him with the pro-Western oligarch Petro Poroshenko. Since then, the country has been plunged ever deeper into civil war and corruption, and situation of the population has drastically worsened.

The war in Syria is likewise the outcome of Washington’s attempts at regime change—with the same devastating consequences for the population. The so-called rebels largely consist of militias associated with Al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups and are provided with weapons and funds from the CIA, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Now the German media complains because Russia’s intervention in the largely destroyed country has weakened these murderous forces.

The Putin regime has no progressive answer to this imperialist aggression. It bases itself on criminal oligarchs who enriched themselves on state property following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They cannot appeal to the international working class and vacillate between attempts to come to terms with the West at any price and the threat of military retaliation. This makes the situation all the more dangerous and explosive.



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