

German weekly *Die Zeit* defends Al Qaeda

Peter Schwarz

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As is well known, truth is the first casualty of war. This applies in particular to the Syrian war. The reports of German television and newspapers are generally nothing but propaganda.

Germany's leading media present the picture of an uneven struggle between a bloodthirsty dictator, who is supported by similarly brutal foreign powers (Iran, Russia), and so-called "rebels," who defend the people against the attacks of the Assad regime and the terrorism of the Islamic State. The rebels, according to this official presentation, are (inadequately) supported—or even sabotaged—by the NATO powers.

The historical and political background to the conflict is suppressed, as are the political and economic interests pursued by the US, Germany and other NATO powers in the Middle East. Above all, the real role and aims of the so-called "rebels," who are supported and armed by the USA and its allies, are carefully concealed.

Two years ago, the German media deliberately obscured the fascistic nature of the armed militias behind the coup in Ukraine. Now they systematically conceal the fact that the Syrian "rebels" mainly consist of Islamist jihadis. The Western powers work with the same forces in Syria that they utilize as a pretext for building a police state at home and mounting military interventions abroad under the pretext of the "war against terror."

There are, however, moments in which the mask falls off and more is said than intended. Such is the case with the article "Assad needs war" by Andrea Böhm, which appeared on *Die Zeit* online on September 11.

The Beirut-based Middle East correspondent of the liberal weekly is obviously outraged by the agreement on Syria that the US and Russia announced Saturday. This is not "an agreement on a ceasefire," she writes, but rather "an agreement on who is allowed to be bombed after Monday."

The suggestion that a deal signed by Washington, which has conducted war in the region for 25 years and largely destroyed Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, could bring peace to the ravaged country is of course absurd. Washington has acquiesced to the agreement in order to give some respite to its proxy forces around Aleppo. In addition, it is exploiting the dreadful conditions faced by the Syrian people to prepare for an even greater military intervention under the pretext of defending "human rights."

But this is not what *Die Zeit* is attacking. Rather, Böhm is appalled that the Russian-American agreement calls upon the "moderate rebels" to "distance themselves not only militarily but also physically from the old Nusra Front in the next days."

"The non-jihadist armed groups, including the 'Free Syrian Army', believe they have been betrayed and sold out to Assad and Putin by the US and its Western allies," complains Böhm. And this "for understandable reasons." The group is "the strongest military faction in the ranks of the anti-Assad forces. ... The enhanced former Nusra Front has become the life insurance for many moderate rebel groups. To reject it would be considered by most of them as political and military suicide."

Böhm leaves no doubt as to the character of the Nusra Front. It is, as she writes, the "offshoot of Al Qaeda in Syria, which recently seceded on tactical grounds from the terrorist network and renamed itself Jabhat Fateh al-Sham [Front for the Conquest of Syria/the Levant]."

This means that the Syrian branch of Al Qaeda, which was responsible for the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and which has served as a pretext for the "war on terror" ever since, is the "life insurance" of Washington's and Berlin's Syrian allies and the "the strongest military faction in the ranks of the anti-Assad forces," which they support. That Böhm's article appeared on the 15th anniversary of 9/11 underscores

the cynicism of *Die Zeit*.

One can easily imagine what will happen to Syria should these forces prevail. One need only look to Libya, where numerous warlords and Islamist groups are terrorizing the country since the US and its allies brought about the fall of the Gaddafi regime. The numerous ethnic and religious minorities living in Syria for centuries would face ethnic cleansing and expulsion.

It was certainly not Böhm's intention, but her article convincingly refutes the allegation that the military interventions by the Western powers in Syria serves humanistic goals. Both the US and Germany are pursuing imperialist interests there—control of the world's most important oil and gas reserves and of a region of enormous geo-strategic importance. In doing so, they consciously accept the deaths of hundreds of thousands, and the displacement of millions.

It is significant that this article appeared in *Die Zeit*, whose readership comes mainly from the liberal, pro-SPD, educated upper-middle class. With the intensification of social and international tensions, these layers of the well-off petty bourgeoisie are increasingly moving to the right and enthusiastically supporting German militarism.

Thus *Die Zeit* editor Jochen Bittner is among the pioneers of an aggressive military German foreign policy. He co-authored the paper "New Power—New Responsibility" that prepared the return of German militarism.

Also the Greens, who rest on the same social milieu, favour a military intervention in Syria by Germany. Their defence spokesman Omid Nouripour, speaking on the German national public radio network *Deutschlandfunk*, also criticised the demand that "the Free Syrian Army, the so-called moderate opposition, that all forces fighting against Assad must now disentangle themselves from the so-called Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the former Nusra Front."

"I don't know how that should happen," he said. "Meanwhile, in the north of the country the former Nusra Front is the strongest force against Assad, and if one breaks away from it, one must give up a lot of territory throughout the country. I do not think many groups are willing to do that."

The Left Party is vigorously involved in the Syrian war as well. They have supported the destabilisation of

the Assad regime, and the building up of the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition, with whose help Washington, and also Berlin, have driven the country into civil war. Their most important ally is the Syrian oppositionist Michel Kilo, who is one of the advocates of Western military intervention.



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