

New York Daily News column hails assassination of Russian ambassador

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The editorial reaction of the major US media to Monday's assassination of Russia's ambassador to Turkey, Andrei Karlov, by a member of an elite Turkish police unit has been highly revealing.

Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the American political establishment's two 'newspapers of record,' published editorials that essentially lamented that the murder had not furthered a rupture in the recently warming relations between the Turkish and Russian governments.

On the contrary, just a day after the killing the Russian, Turkish and Iranian foreign ministers met in Moscow and drafted a joint declaration laying out a proposal to achieve a cease-fire and political settlement in Syria.

The meeting, from which Washington was excluded, was made possible by the stunning defeat suffered by US imperialism's proxy forces in Syria—the Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militia—with the Syrian government's retaking of eastern Aleppo. The loss by the Islamists of their last major urban stronghold signals the failure of the nearly six-year-old CIA-orchestrated war for regime change that has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands and turned millions more into refugees.

The *New York Times*, noting worriedly that the assassination had "not ruptured relations" between Moscow and Ankara, warned that "losing Turkey as an ally would be another unacceptable casualty of the Syrian war."

The *Washington Post*, while asserting that the killing was a "sign that Russia may pay a price in blowback for its intervention in Syria," concluded that it had done nothing to deter a Russian-Turkish alliance that could have the effect of "excluding the United States from the endgame of Syria's civil war and critically weakening U.S. influence across the Middle East."

The implications of these editorials are clear. While formally opposing the assassination of Karlov, the *Times*

and the *Post* are concerned that the killing appears to have had the opposite of the desired effect.

Given the rabidly anti-Russian campaign, including hysterical denunciations of the siege of east Aleppo as a "massacre" and even "genocide," as well as suggestions by leading US officials such as ex-CIA chief Michael Morell that Washington must make Moscow "pay a price," including by "killing Russians," these reactions raise the inevitable question of to what extent Washington was involved in the assassination, either directly or indirectly. Officials and media sources in both Russia and Turkey have voiced strong suspicion that there were direct links.

From one quarter of the media, however, there is not even a pretense of opposition to the assassination.

The *New York Daily News* published a column Tuesday by Gersh Kuntzman whose headline argued that the assassination of the ambassador "was not terrorism, but retribution for Vladimir Putin's war crimes."

The gunning down of Karlov in an Ankara art gallery was a matter, the column argued, of "justice being served." Such vile declarations make Kuntzman and the *Daily News* accomplices to Karlov's murder after the fact.

Kuntzman describes himself as a "liberal" and wrote before the election as a declared supporter of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. He enthusiastically joined in the neo-McCarthyite propaganda campaign mounted over the unsubstantiated allegations of Russian hacking and interference in the US election. In another column Kuntzman described Russia's President Putin as "a murderous, expansionistic autocrat who follows decades of murderous, expansionistic autocrats from the czars through the Bolsheviks through the Cold War to today..."

Kuntzman provides the typical US propaganda narrative of the Russian-backed siege of eastern Aleppo, portraying it as an entirely one-sided slaughter of civilians in which

the US-backed Islamist militias who terrorized the local population are entirely excluded from consideration.

Karlov, whose career goes back to the Soviet diplomatic corps in the mid-1970s, “wasn’t a diplomat, but a soldier,” Kuntzman writes, “and his death is the same whether it came on a battlefield outside Aleppo or in an art gallery in Ankara.”

One somehow doubts that Kuntzman would employ the same logic in the event of the killing of a US ambassador by any one of the millions of Iraqis, Afghans, Libyans, Yemenis, Somalis, Pakistanis and Syrians who have seen their families and loved-ones killed by US military interventions.

What makes Kuntzman’s dishonest and debased column even more noxious is his attempt to draw a historical analogy between the murder of Karlov in Ankara and the November 7, 1938 killing of a Nazi official in Paris by 17-year-old Herschel Grynszpan, the son of Polish-Jewish parents who grew up in Germany.

The young Grynszpan killed Ernst vom Rath, a Nazi representative in Paris and member of the SA, Hitler’s Stormtroopers. In an apparent attempt to further his equation of Rath with Karlov, Kuntzman idiotically writes that Stormtrooper Rath’s crime was that he “could have stood up to the Nazi leadership when it would have mattered most, but he did not.”

Grynszpan carried out the killing immediately after the Nazi regime ordered the mass deportation of some 12,000 Polish Jews, his parents included, who were brutally rounded up and dumped on the Polish border. The assassination was invoked as the pretext for the Kristallnacht pogroms against the Jewish population of Germany. Grynszpan was jailed first by the French government and then by the Nazis, and was most likely murdered in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1942.

At the time of the killing, Leon Trotsky, the leader of the Russian Revolution and founder of the Fourth International, defended Grynszpan against the slanders of both the Nazis and the Moscow Stalinists. While making clear the opposition of Marxists to the tactic of individual terror, Trotsky recognized that Grynszpan was “not a political militant but an inexperienced youth, almost a boy, whose only counselor was a feeling of indignation.”

“The unprecedented crimes of fascism create a yearning for vengeance that is wholly justifiable,” Trotsky wrote. “But so monstrous is the scope of their crimes, that this yearning cannot be satisfied by the assassination of isolated fascist bureaucrats. For that it is necessary to set in motion millions, tens and hundreds of millions of the

oppressed throughout the whole world and lead them in the assault upon the strongholds of the old society.”

Kuntzman has no such concerns. Terrorism against Russia, US imperialism’s designated enemy, is just fine with him. To justify it, he equates the acts of Putin with those of Hitler, thereby simultaneously making the case for war with Russia and diminishing and relativizing the historic crimes of Nazism.

By making these comparisons, Kuntzman not only attempts to bestow legitimacy on the assassination of Karlov, but also manages to smear the memory of Grynszpan by associating his action with that carried out by the most reactionary, fascistic and sectarian forces.

Mevlüt Mert Altın, who pumped nine bullets into Ambassador Karlov’s back, was no innocent youth, but a trained killer, a member of the Ankara riot squad and someone who reportedly served on the security detail of Turkey’s president.

Moreover, there is persuasive evidence that he carried out the killing in support of the Al Qaeda-linked militias in Syria. After gunning down the ambassador, Altın began ranting first in Arabic and then in Turkish, shouting out that he was one of those “who give Mohammed our allegiance for jihad,” a slogan used by Al Qaeda. Moreover, Jaish al-Fatah (Army of Conquest), the joint command center of Islamist militias dominated by the Syrian Al Qaeda affiliate, issued a statement Wednesday claiming responsibility for the assassination.

None of this, of course, finds its way into Kuntzman’s despicable column. That a major American newspaper can publish such a piece, lionizing an Al Qaeda killer and justifying an act of terrorism, is a telling indication of the crisis and disorientation gripping the US ruling establishment. It is a warning that such forces will be employed again in far deadlier actions, and a measure of the advanced state of the preparations for war against Russia.



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