

European governments support Trump's attack on Syria

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Following the American attack on Syria's al-Shayrat airbase, Europe's governments have almost unanimously declared their support for the bombardment, which killed at least nine civilians.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union) and French President François Hollande gave their support to the attack in a joint statement released Friday. They declared, "France and Germany will continue to seek with our partners and within the framework of the United Nations to hold President Assad accountable for his criminal acts." They cynically stated that Assad bore "sole responsibility for this development." His "repeated use of chemical weapons and his crimes against his own population" had to be "sanctioned."

Britain and Poland also backed the attack. A spokesman for British Prime Minister Theresa May spoke of an "appropriate answer" to a "barbaric chemical weapons attack." Polish President Andrzej Duda declared that America's military action enjoyed his "full support." The "civilised world" was not able to "sit back and accept this unbelievably barbaric act." The Polish government condemned "crimes against the civilian population with all its power."

The hypocrisy and ruthlessness of the European governments is breath-taking. Although the circumstances surrounding the alleged gas attack remain unclear and everything points to an imperialist provocation, they are all decisively supporting—unlike during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the attack on Libya in 2011—a war which violates international law and could quickly escalate into a confrontation with Iran and nuclear-armed Russia. In the process, the media and politicians are discovering their sympathy for President Donald Trump, precisely at the moment when he orders Tomahawk cruise missiles to be rained

down on Syria from a warship in the Mediterranean.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, who at the NATO foreign ministers meeting just a week ago clashed with his American colleague Rex Tillerson, made a statement in support of the attack during a visit to Mali. "It was almost unbearable to have to see how the Security Council was incapable of responding clearly and decisively to the barbaric use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians in Syria," he said. "It is reasonable that the United States has now responded with an attack against the military structures of the Assad regime, which committed this horrific war crime."

Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen (CDU), who has been systematically pushing ahead with the rearming of the German army, spoke out in Berlin in favour of the US bombardment. "The use of chemical weapons must not only be outlawed, it must also have consequences," she stated. She also boasted that US Defence Secretary James "Mad Dog" Mattis had informed her about the attack prior to its launch.

The claim that the German government is concerned about preventing "horrific war crimes" in Syria and the Middle East is a bare-faced lie. Since late 2015, Germany has been one of the warring parties, participating in the destruction of the country with Tornado fighter jets, a warship and 1,200 soldiers. Just days ago it was revealed that the German air force supplied the coordinates for a massacre of civilians in Syria, which claimed the lives of at least 33, including women and children.

Many media outlets and commentators who remained silent about the German crime and shed crocodile tears for the victims of Assad's alleged gas attack are now praising Trump as a war hero.

"Donald Trump has joined the ranks of the

presidents who have gone to war and he has returned to the Middle East,” enthused Stefan Kornelius in a video message on the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* web site. America is “back, and because of a strike that nobody expected from Donald Trump.” He went on, “The isolationist is no more, he is now an interventionist and a military interventionist at that.”

Kornelius, who has close ties to US-aligned think tanks, could hardly control his desire for regime change in Damascus. The message to Assad was “Your days are numbered. America will not tolerate that you continue to be a player in this game.” Europe and the Obama administration were “never ready...to intervene militarily.” But now Trump had “applied pressure,” which “must compel Vladimir Putin to remove his protective hand from Assad.”

The only criticism in the German media of the military intervention has come from the right. In an article titled “Military strike for show with little impact,” *Die Welt* stated, “To really be sure that the regime does not use any more chemical weapons, Trump would have had to have given the Pentagon very different orders. US warplanes would have had to destroy the remaining chemical weapons depots or put all military airfields out of operation.” It remains “for now a major spectacle which cost the lives of a few Syrian soldiers at al-Shayrat and caused significant damage to facilities.”

Deutschlandfunk criticised “Trump’s 180-degree turn” for being a “gut reaction, without a real strategy.” The attack amounted merely to “a single pin prick. But what if Assad continues to provoke? This is all totally unclear.” “The American President cannot decide with his gut” forever. “Rather only on the basis of a real strategy which considers all consequences,” it claimed.

The ruling class understands a “real strategy” to mean an agreed plan for regime change in Damascus and the establishment of a Western-controlled puppet regime. The imperialist powers have been developing such plans for some time. In 2012, Germany’s Foreign Ministry initiated “The day after” project in conjunction with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik-SWP) and sections of the Syrian opposition and drafted a “vision for a post-Assad order.”

While for now the European governments and media are supporting the US attack on Syria, they are not

doing so as disciples of American war policy, but in order to realise their own interests in the oil-rich region. Every government is attempting to expand its role in the US-led coalition so as to secure the biggest slice of the pie possible in the plundering of Syria.

These developments contain great dangers for the working class. The more protracted the war in Syria becomes, the more aggressive will be the actions of the major powers. The question is not whether another attack will come, but rather when and by whom it will be launched. The United States, Germany and the European powers are escalating the intervention in the Middle East in response to the deepening crisis of capitalism.



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