

A reply to Die Zeit editor Jochen Bittner

Johannes Stern
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On July 31, the WSWS published the article “Zeit editor Jochen Bittner condemns ‘German pacifism.’” Following the publication, Bittner wrote to the WSWS requesting the contact information of the author of the article, WSWS editor Johannes Stern. We document the following e-mail exchange between Bittner and Stern.

Dear Mr. Stern, Thank you so much for sending me your contact information. I have just one short question: How old are you?

It seems unlikely to me that you grew up under the Nazi dictatorship. But perhaps you have a career in the SED (East German) regime behind you, for example in the MfS [Ministry for State Security - Stasi]? Or are you very young and historically blind?

I ask because the designation of politically-dissenting people as having a “malignant mentality” was a characteristic of both German dictatorships.

Yours sincerely,
Jochen Bittner
Dr. Jochen Bittner
Die Zeit
Political editor

Dear Dr. Bittner,
You want to know how old I am? I see no reason to give you my exact date of birth. But I will tell you this: I am old enough to remember the German reunification and all the solemn proclamations that this would mark the dawn of a new era of peace and democracy. Since then, like many others of my generation, I have seen all these promises refuted by endless wars, the rise of militarism and, to my great horror, the increasingly aggressive demands for a new German war policy.

My criticism of what you have written is not personal, but political. You use your influence as the political editor of *Die Zeit* and a writer for the *New York Times* to propagate militarism and war, which

have horrific consequences. This is the lesson of the two world wars of the 20th century and the illegal wars of aggression in the Middle East in this century. Your condemnation of pacifism and anti-militarism as “moral arrogance,” especially in the context of German history, is not simply the opinion of a “political dissident.”

As you should know, the first two charges at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials in 1945/46 were “Crimes against Peace” and “Participation in the Planning, Preparation, Unleashing, and Conduct of Wars of Aggression.” This was also taken into account in the German Basic Law. Article 26, for example, states that all “Acts tending to and undertaken with intent to disturb the peaceful relations between nations shall be unconstitutional. They shall be criminalized.”

What your commentary expresses is a now-advanced tendency in politics and the media to openly advocate aggressive foreign and great power politics and war. This includes the systematic trivialization of the crimes of German imperialism in the First and Second World Wars, spearheaded by the Humboldt University Professors Herfried Muenkler (“It is hardly possible to carry out a responsible policy in Europe if one takes the view that we were to blame for everything”) and Jörg Baberowski (“Hitler was not vicious”).

Finally, allow me to ask you a question. In the course of your numerous strategy discussions with representatives of the foreign policy establishment and think tanks—such as the German Marshall Fund and the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik [German Institute for International and Security Affairs]—have you ever discussed the consequences of your war-mongering? What would the world look like if it had to “fear” German militarism once again? How many countries are to be attacked this time and how many human lives are to be sacrificed for the interests of German imperialism and capitalism? What would be the

consequences of a war against Iran or even against the nuclear power Russia, for which you and *Die Zeit* agitate so diligently?

“Historically blind” describes someone who deals with these questions in a cynical and provocative manner and who, 80 years after the beginning of the Second World War, is once again agitating for war.

Yours sincerely,

Johannes Stern



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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