

EU parliament calls for international investigation into alleged poisoning of Navalny

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Last Thursday, the European parliament passed a non-binding resolution, calling for an international investigation into the alleged poisoning of the right-wing Russian oppositionist Alexei Navalny. The resolution represents a significant escalation of the attempts by the European imperialist powers to destabilize the Putin regime and ratchet up tensions with Russia.

Without providing evidence for any of its claims, the resolution speaks about the “attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny,” condemning it as “part of a systemic effort to silence him and other dissident voices.”

The EU parliament urged an investigation involving the OPCW (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) into a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Russian *Nezasimaya Gazeta* pointed out that such an investigation “into Russian domestic affairs” would be “unprecedented,” writing: “The proposal of the European parliament is reminiscent of the practice of international tribunals which have been created for a number of countries, above all in [the former] Yugoslavia and Rwanda.”

The resolution also explicitly expressed political support for the anti-Putin opposition that Navalny is leading and calls for sanctions that target financial assets of “corrupted figures” from the Putin regime, in a clear attempt to further destabilize and foster divisions within the crisis-ridden Russian oligarchy. Finally, the resolution calls for pausing the construction of the almost completed Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is to deliver gas directly from Russia to Germany, falling short of demanding that the project be scrapped entirely.

In the German media, an aggressive campaign has been waged ever since the illness of Navalny, demanding that the project be scrapped altogether. However, there are also concerns about the impact on German companies, which have been heavily involved in this project. Moreover, newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ),

a leading mouthpiece of the German bourgeoisie, have warned of giving up the project, which Washington has repeatedly demanded. Shortly before the Navalny case began, the *FAZ* insisted that “to give in [to the US over Nord Stream] is not an option.” The pipeline is also part of an energy and national security strategy by Berlin that is aimed at turning the country into a central hub for European energy supplies.

A few days after the EU resolution, on Saturday, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published an interview with Leonid Volkov, the chief of Navalny’s staff. In the interview, Volkov insisted that there was no question that Putin ordered the “attack” on Navalny, and called for involvement of the OPCW in an investigation.

There is little question as to what results such an “investigation” would bring: WikiLeaks documents have exposed the foul role of the OPCW in imperialist provocations during the Syrian civil war, in particular. In 2018, the OPCW fabricated a false report, on behalf of the US, Great Britain and France, that gave credence to their lies that the Assad regime was to blame for chemical attacks in the Syrian civil war. The doctored report, which was written in explicit opposition to evidence the OPCW’s own investigators found, was critical to providing the pretext for a military attack on Syria.

Volkov also repeatedly compared Putin directly to Hitler, whose Nazi regime was responsible for the murder of 6 million European Jews, countless political opponents and tens of millions of civilians throughout Europe and the Soviet Union. These comparisons were gleefully encouraged by the interviewer, Konrad Schuller. Over the past years, the *FAZ* has played a central role in justifying the relativization of Nazi crimes by German academics like Jörg Baberowski, and has spearheaded the public campaign against the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP-Socialist Equality Party), which has led the opposition to the resurgence of fascism in Germany.

Volkov then emphasized that the opposition had to be “the strongest force” in Russia should there be a palace coup and a movement against Putin.

The Navalny case bears all the hallmarks of a major political provocation. On a factual level, nothing makes sense. While the imperialist powers unanimously proclaim that he has been poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok, one of the deadliest poisons in the world, Navalny has almost recovered within weeks with no apparent lasting damage, and is now hammering away at the Putin regime on social media.

Navalny fell seriously ill on a flight from Tomsk to Moscow on August 20. His illness coincided with the peak of the crisis in Belarus, where mass protests and strikes against the Lukashenko regime erupted after the August 9 elections. The EU, and especially Germany, have sought to intervene in this crisis by bolstering the pro-NATO opposition, while seeking to contain the strike movement, to advance their geopolitical interests in Eastern Europe.

Within 48 hours, German Chancellor Angela Merkel arranged for his flight from Omsk to Berlin’s Charité, the leading university clinic in Europe. The flight was organized by an NGO whose backers and board members include Bill and Hillary Clinton, as well as the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his foreign minister, Joschka Fischer.

In fact, by the time he reached Germany, his condition had already stabilized. Laboratory tests done by the German army (Bundeswehr) allegedly found traces of the extremely deadly Novichok nerve agent on a bottle that Navalny supposedly used, as well as on his body.

No one has even tried to explain how not only Navalny survived the alleged poisoning with Novichok largely unscathed, but also why no one in his surroundings showed the slightest symptoms of poisoning. When Sergei Skripal and his daughter were allegedly poisoned in Britain with Novichok in 2018—a case that was generally no less obscure than that of Navalny—one person that had come into contact with the Skripals died, and entire buildings had to be evacuated for contamination.

The story was made even less credible when reports emerged last week alleging that supporters of Navalny had physically rescued this particular water bottle from a hotel room as soon as news of the poisoning had emerged. None of the team’s members showed any signs of poisoning. Moreover, up until the German army lab claimed to have found Novichok on the bottle, there had been no reports whatsoever of any water bottle. On the contrary, Navalny’s team insisted for days that all he had consumed on August 20 was a cup of black tea at the airport.

Despite these glaring contradictions, the German

government and media have launched an extraordinary campaign over the Navalny case directed against the Putin regime. The Russian government has repeatedly described the case as a “gross hostile provocation” and has sharply warned of a serious deterioration of Russian-German relations.

Workers must be warned of the sinister operations of the imperialist powers which now center on escalating the military build-up and bolstering the forces around Navalny. Navalny’s opposition has nothing to do with defending democratic rights or opposing the Putin regime on an even remotely progressive basis.

Navalny himself has long maintained ties to far-right forces in Russia, and Leonid Volkov is a key figure in the opposition’s strategy of bolstering regionalist and separatist forces in Russia.

Volkov has close connections to Fedor Krashennikov, an advocate of separatism in the Urals who has been described by the Russian business daily Kommersant as one of the many “local businessmen who feel squeezed by Moscow [businessmen].” In the past, Krashennikov has worked for Anton Bakov from the Monarchist Party of Russia, who is considered the “grey cardinal” of the separatists fighting for a “Ural Republic.” Last spring, Navalny’s staff and Krashennikov co-led protests in Yekaterinburg, a city in the Urals, under regionalist and separatist banners. Navalny’s opposition has also supported regionalist demands in the recent protests in the Far Eastern city of Khabarovsk.

Both Navalny and Volkov have participated in Yale University’s “World Fellows Program,” which has a long record of training imperialist stooges in Eastern Europe.

Genuine popular opposition to the Putin regime and the criminal oligarchy that has emerged out of the Stalinist restoration of capitalism is growing by the day as the Kremlin, like capitalist governments around the world, is pursuing the murderous policy of “herd immunity” amid the pandemic. However, this opposition can only find a progressive expression if it is based on the independent mobilization of the working class, in conscious opposition to the machinations of imperialism and the capitalist system as a whole.



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