

Nazi propaganda in Germany's *taz* newspaper

Peter Schwarz
13 May 2022

The daily newspaper *taz*, which is close to the Green Party, has published an article on the anniversary of Germany's liberation from National Socialism (Nazism) for which the term "Nazi propaganda" would be an understatement.

In it, Russian journalist and writer Julia Latynina argues that it was Stalin, not Hitler, who was responsible for the Second World War. "The real story of the Second World War is that Stalin had planned this war, which was to cover the whole world and end only when even the last Argentine Soviet republic would have become part of the USSR," she claims. "He had planned this war—long before Hitler came to power."

The 1,800-word article strings together so many falsifications, lies and slanders that even seasoned neo-Nazi rags would have trouble fitting them into one issue. Latynina insults the Red Army, maligns millions of Soviet citizens who gave their lives or lost loved ones in the fight against Nazi terror and presents Hitler's generals Guderian and Rommel as shining examples.

Latynina does not utter a syllable about the crimes of the Nazis, who meticulously planned the war against the Soviet Union as a "war of extermination" and killed almost 30 million Jews, communists, soldiers and civilians.

Instead, she denounces the Red Army soldiers who bore the brunt of the fight against the Nazis as a "disenfranchised rabble" who were "sent to their deaths in thousands and thousands" and went murdering, pillaging and raping through the countries from which they had driven the Wehrmacht (Hitler's Army). "It is on this foundation of bones, blood and flesh that Putin builds his cult of May 9—the cult of the Great Patriotic War," she writes.

As a key witness to "the mass rapes and murders committed by Stalin's 'liberators' on the territory of Romania," she quoted the writer Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, who worked as a diplomat for the fascist dictator Ion Antonescu during the war. Antonescu was allied with Hitler and responsible for the murder of 400,000 Jews.

Latynina denounces the Soviet partisans who fought against the Nazis as terrorists whose "terror was directed primarily not against the Germans but against the local population." In the same breath, she accuses the "Chinese communists and Viet Cong fighters" of having later adopted the basic principles of this "extremely cruel and effective terror."

Latynina's remarks about the siege of Leningrad are particularly repulsive. Hitler's Wehrmacht had bombed and starved the city of millions for 28 months; 470,000 civilians died in the process, without the Wehrmacht managing to take the city. But Latynina's hatred is not for the besiegers, but for the defenders. She describes Soviet soldiers who died defending the city as victims of Stalinism.

Finally, Latynina denounces Russian President Putin as a "second Stalin" and calls on the "free world" not to repeat the mistake from World War II when it "closed its eyes to who Stalin was." Putin embodied "both Hitler and Stalin at the same time," therefore the "free world" was now helping Ukraine and "no one will look away any more."

Latynina's right-wing extremism

The printing of this fascist filth in the *taz* shows how far to the right the Green milieu, with which the newspaper has been closely associated since its foundation 43 years ago, has moved.

Latynina's tirade appeared both in the online edition of the *taz* and in a special printed supplement she provided to the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* on May 9. *Novaya Gazeta* ceased publication in Russia because of censorship. Latynina writes regularly for the paper, which is considered the voice of the "liberal" opposition, but apparently has no problem collaborating with right-wing extremists.

The *taz* itself knew very well to whom it was offering a platform. It had already published an article about Latynina three-and-a-half years ago, when she was on a reading tour through Germany. The article clearly identifies her as a right-wing extremist.

She was leading "a crusade against leftists, immigrants, human rights activists and universal suffrage," the *taz* reported, constantly warned "of the dangers of Islam," considered climate change "an invention of the global bureaucracy and science officials," admired [notorious Islamophobe] Thilo Sarrazin and the South African apartheid regime and showed sympathy for the Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik. In the meantime, Latynina had become "an acolyte of Ayn Rand's libertarianism." She criticised universal suffrage "as a danger to democracy because it leaves taxpayers at the mercy of a tyranny of welfare recipients."

Latynina has long held such far-right positions. In 2010, she had condemned the election of Viktor Yanukovich as Ukrainian president in an editorial for *The Moscow Times*, saying: "Unfortunately, only wealthy people are really able to elect their politicians responsibly. Poor people vote for politicians like Yanukovich or Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez." Four years later, Yanukovich was overthrown in a right-wing coup backed by the US and Germany.

The right-wing author has been showered with numerous international honours. In 2008, for example, then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, one of the main leaders of the Iraq War, presented her with the State Department's "Freedom Defenders Award."

The *taz* defends Latynina's inflammatory article

Although the editors of the *taz* were aware of Latynina's extreme right-wing views, they published her historical-revisionist article without any comment. Only when protests were voiced on social media did Stefan Reinecke, head of the *taz*'s opinion department, write a "reply"—which essentially justifies the article!

Although Reinecke accuses Latynina of going too far, with her “predilection for shrill opinions” she sailed in “murky waters.” Her thesis that Stalin planned the Second World War before Hitler came to power was “close to the propaganda lie that Hitler waged a pre-emptive war against Stalin in 1941.” This “lie cultivated by German right-wing extremists” diminished Hitler’s crimes and cast “the role of the enemy of humanity” onto Bolshevism.

Nevertheless, Reinecke sees Latynina’s neo-Nazi tirade as a legitimate and necessary contribution to the revision of Germany’s culture of remembrance. “The overly friendly German view of Moscow also had something to do with a historical consciousness of guilt towards Russia,” he writes. “Nowhere was the Nazi war of extermination as cruel as in the Soviet Union, of which Russia is the legal successor.”

“The nationally tinged commemorative productions from Kiev to Warsaw”—meaning the public veneration of Nazi collaborators and dictators like Stepan Bandera and Józef Piłsudski—“were watched in the West, however, with a mixture of perplexity and disinterest.” According to the *taz* editor, this must change: “Do we have to re-evaluate history, the concepts? In parts, yes.”

German remembrance culture was “centred on the Holocaust in an occasionally self-referential way,” Reinecke complains. “To reflexively reject questions about the comparison of National Socialism (Nazism) and Stalinism as attempts at relativisation” was “an unproductive attitude.”

What was needed was a “dialogical remembering,” “in which the history of the violence of others is not dismissed as secondary and other victim narratives viewed with a minimum of empathy.” This was “exhausting, but the only way to thoroughly air shut-off cultures of remembrance.”

One has to bear in mind the dimension of the Nazis’ crimes in order to grasp the monstrosity that Reinecke is proposing here on behalf of the *taz* editorial team. The industrial murder of 6 million Jews, the annihilation of the population of entire regions, the shooting of hundreds of thousands without a court sentence, the enslavement of millions of forced labourers and the killing of 3 million Soviet prisoners of war are to be put on a par with the “victim narratives” of the perpetrators and collaborators!

Stepan Bandera, whose “victim narrative” is now part of the official Ukrainian state ideology, collaborated with the German Wehrmacht as leader of the fascist-terrorist Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and was jointly responsible for the murder of 800,000 Jews and 100,000 Poles in what is now western Ukraine.

According to Reinecke, the revision of history has its limits where “revisionist legends ... resemble Nazi slogans.” But that is precisely where his demand to look at “other victim narratives with a minimum of empathy” leads. On closer inspection, the “airing of the shut-off cultures of memory” turns out to be a rehabilitation of Nazi ideology, as Latynina does in her *taz* article.

The *taz* and war propaganda

The rehabilitation of right-wing extremist ideology by the *taz* has a long history. Since the Greens first entered the federal government in 1998, the newspaper, which had been closely associated with the party since its foundation, became a driving force of German militarism. It was at the forefront of justifying Germany’s wars against Serbia and Afghanistan through invoking human rights and even Auschwitz.” Later, it attacked the Merkel government from the right for not intervening aggressively enough in Libya, Syria and Ukraine.

In March 2018, the Sunday edition of the *taz* devoted a three-page cover story to defending the far-right historian Jörg Baberowski. It attacked the

Trotskyist youth organisation IYSSE for publicly criticising Baberowski.

Baberowski’s views on the Second World War are similar to those of Latynina. As early as 2007, he had claimed that the Nazis’ war of extermination had been “imposed” on the Wehrmacht by Stalin and his generals. In 2014, he then openly backed Ernst Nolte in *Der Spiegel*, who had triggered the *Historikerstreit* (historians’ controversy) in 1986 with his thesis that National Socialism was merely an ultimately justified reaction to Bolshevism. Baberowski himself added: “Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not cruel. He didn’t want the extermination of the Jews to be talked about at his table.”

Only the IYSSE and the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, Socialist Equality Party) criticised this outrageous trivialisation of Hitler. In articles, leaflets and meetings the IYSSE and SGP showed the link to the present-day return of German militarism. “The revival of German militarism requires a new interpretation of history that trivialises the crimes of the Nazi era,” the IYSSE declared.

In the same month that the *Spiegel* article appeared, leading representatives of the German government announced the end of military restraint at the Munich Security Conference: Germany would once again play a role in Europe and the world that actually corresponded to its size and influence. A few days later, the German government supported the right-wing coup in Kiev that brought a pro-Western regime to power and laid the groundwork for today’s war.

The IYSSE came under fierce attack from the media, politicians and professors for their criticism of Baberowski and militarism—but gained great support among students and workers.

In 2018, when the *taz* fired its broadside against the IYSSE, there could no longer be any doubt about Baberowski’s far-right orientation. He had become the mouthpiece of the campaign against refugees, ranted on all channels against the “talk of a welcoming culture” and had built up a network in Berlin that included everything having rank and name in the neo-right scene. Courts in Cologne and Hamburg had confirmed that Baberowski could legitimately be called a “right-wing extremist” and a “falsifier of history.”

At the time, the WSW raised the question: “Why does the *taz* defend the right-wing extremist ideologue Baberowski?” It explained: “A whole layer of politicians, opinion-makers, and affluent petty bourgeois is recalibrating their political compass in light of the return of German militarism and growing class tensions.” The *taz*, which was founded in 1979 as the central organ of those parts of the ‘68 movement “that had gathered in the Greens and spoke for very well-off middle-class layers,” was now moving rapidly to the right, like the Green Party.

The Ukraine war has confirmed this assessment. The official propaganda that NATO was defending freedom and democracy against an authoritarian aggressor is a transparent lie. The conflict was instigated by NATO over many years and then massively escalated to destroy Russia as a major military power, overthrow its government and gain access to its vast reserves of raw materials. President Putin’s reactionary and short-sighted decision to attack Ukraine militarily served as a welcome pretext. Ukraine is a pawn in this conflict and its population serves as cannon fodder.

The US alone has approved \$53 billion for the war in the last three months. Added to this are billions more and vast quantities of weapons from Germany and Europe. The costs are borne by the working class—in the form of the threat of a third, nuclear world war, rising prices job losses and social cuts to finance arms spending. Already there have been general strikes and uprisings in Sri Lanka and other countries.

The Greens and their mouthpiece, the *taz*, are responding by moving even further to the right. On April 30, a small Green Party conference overwhelmingly supported the delivery of heavy weapons to Ukraine and the German government’s €100 billion arms programme. Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Green Economy Minister Robert

Habeck are the most aggressive advocates in the government for an escalation of the war and an extension of sanctions.

The *taz* supports this war hysteria by rewriting history and publishing articles that in the past would have been found only in obscure neo-Nazi papers.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact