

Why the German media deny US responsibility for the destruction of Nord Stream

Peter Schwarz
24 February 2023

Denial, concealment and character assassination—these are the reactions of the German media, politicians and judiciary to revelations by award-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh that the US government is responsible for the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines. Hersh published research on February 8 this year that meticulously describes how the attack on the gas pipeline was planned, prepared and executed.

According to the report, two months before the Ukraine war began, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan had formed a task force of military, CIA and government officials that met in an office building near the White House and drew up plans to destroy the pipeline.

Then, in June 2022, US Navy specialist divers attached two explosive charges to each of the pipeline’s four tubes. The operation took place as part of NATO’s BALTOPS manoeuvres so that the divers’ deployment would not attract attention. Logistically, the US divers were supported by Norway. After some initial hesitation, the bombs were then remotely detonated using sonar on September 26 by White House order. Two failed, so one of the four tubes remained intact.

One might have expected Hersh’s revelations to dominate the headlines and be followed up by other German media outlets that have the means to do so, such as *Der Spiegel* or *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. After all, this was the largest act of terrorism against an object of European infrastructure in decades and—if Hersh’s research is correct—an act of war by Washington against its NATO partners.

Nord Stream connects Russia directly to Germany and—even if the pipeline was not in operation at the time of the explosion because of the Ukraine war—could have supplied Western Europe with cheap gas from Russia for decades to come. Half the construction costs of Nord Stream 1 and 2, amounting to around 20 billion euros, had been borne by Western European energy companies, which also owned half of Nord Stream 1.

But nothing of the sort happened. Most German media devoted only a brief note to Hersh’s research. They uncritically repeated US government denials and focused on destroying Hersh’s reputation. “Pulitzer Prize winner on the wrong track” (*taz*), “The dark side of a star reporter” (*Süddeutsche*) and “Star reporter with dubious reputation” (*t-online*) were typical headlines. The only exception was the *Berliner Zeitung*, which published an extensive

interview with Hersh on February 14, in which he discussed further details and answered objections.

The judiciary and the governments of Germany, Denmark and Sweden, in whose territorial waters the attack took place, are also stonewalling. Although five months have now passed since the attack and the crime scene has been thoroughly investigated, they have remained silent. For reasons of confidentiality, Sweden and Denmark have withdrawn from the joint investigation team with Germany that was originally supposed to conduct the investigation together. Since then, each country has been investigating—and covering up—on its own.

Journalistic and parliamentary inquiries have been shot down. For example, just three weeks after the attack, the Ministry of Economics responded to a written question from Left Party parliamentarian Sahra Wagenknecht, saying it had, “after careful consideration, come to the conclusion that further information cannot be provided—not even in classified form—for reasons of state welfare.”

In justification, the ministry, headed by Green Robert Habeck, cited the “third party rule” for international cooperation between intelligence services, with its strict secrecy requirements: “The requested information thus affects secrecy interests that require protection in such a way that the welfare of the state outweighs the parliamentary right to information, and the right of members of parliament to ask questions must exceptionally take a back seat to the secrecy interests of the federal government.”

The government also refused to answer the question, “which NATO ships and troop units” were in the region. An answer “would involve the disclosure of information that particularly affects the welfare of the state,” the Foreign Ministry wrote. “Even the slight risk of it becoming known” could not be tolerated.

In other words, the German government knew that the US had carried out the attack but denied it for political reasons.

President Joe Biden had even publicly announced corresponding plans two weeks before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. “If Russia invades, there will be no more Nord Stream 2, we will put an end to the project,” he threatened at a joint press conference with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. And when asked how this would be possible if Germany controlled the pipeline, he replied, “I promise we will be able to do it.” By that time, the elaborate plans to blow up the pipeline were already in place.

One of the main accusations against Hersh was that he relied on a single source in the US security apparatus whose identity he is keeping secret for security reasons, whereas journalistic due diligence requires at least two sources. In fact, one of Hersh's primary sources is the president's threat and Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, who made similar comments. After the attack, she exulted that she was pleased "Nord Stream 2 is now, as they say, a pile of junk at the bottom of the ocean."

Knowledge of US responsibility for the attack was widespread, Hersh told the *Berliner Zeitung*. "The people in America and Europe who build pipelines know what happened... The people who own companies that build pipelines know the story." He said he "didn't hear it from them," but he "quickly learned that they knew."

In Germany, meanwhile, Attorney General Peter Frank is investigating "unknown persons" for the attack. But he, too, invokes the duty of secrecy and—to put it mildly—does not display any particular investigative zeal.

In response to a parliamentary question by Wagenknecht as to whether the government would review the detailed information provided by Hersh, the Justice Ministry replied that the Attorney General had "no findings in the sense of the recent publication." The ministry declined to provide information on findings from the preliminary investigation, stating that this would "complicate or even thwart further investigative measures."

That Washington planned and executed the attack is the only plausible explanation for the destruction of Nord Stream. Hersh has provided ample circumstantial evidence and facts to support this. The claim spread after the attack that Russia had destroyed the pipeline itself is so absurd that it was quickly dropped. Even Attorney General Frank has publicly confirmed that there is no evidence for this.

The US, on the other hand, not only has the necessary means for such an elaborate operation, but also a motive. Asked about this by the *Berliner Zeitung*, Hersh pointed to a press conference held by Antony Blinken shortly after the pipelines were blown up. There, the US Secretary of State had called the destruction of the pipelines a "tremendous opportunity," a "chance to take away Russia's ability to use the pipelines as a weapon." Russia, he said, could now no longer pressure Western Europe to end its support for the US in the Ukraine war.

"The fear was that Western Europe would no longer participate," Hersh said. "I think the reason for that decision was that the war wasn't going well for the West, and they were afraid of winter coming. ... The US was afraid that Germany would lift sanctions because of a cold winter." In addition, he said, the US was making a lot of money on liquefied natural gas (LNG), which it was now selling to Europe.

If the German media and politicians nevertheless deny US responsibility and instead denounce Hersh, it is solely for political reasons. The blowing up of the pipelines by the US destroys the official myth that NATO is an alliance of democratic states fighting for freedom in Ukraine. It shows NATO as it really is—an alliance of imperialist brigands who have allied themselves against a common enemy, while behind their backs they have long since drawn the knife to rip each other apart.

For thirty years, the US has waged one brutal war after another to secure its position as the dominant world power. On the Eurasian landmass, Washington pursues the goal formulated in 1997 by geostrategist Zbigniew Brzezinski of "preventing the emergence of a dominant, opposing power." This is directed primarily against China and Russia, but also against Germany, which should not rise to become the dominant power in Europe.

Germany's ruling circles, on the other hand, see the current war as an opportunity to achieve just that, to finally rearm massively and—as they openly proclaim—to become the "leading military power in Europe." In the long run, they consider an open conflict with the US inevitable, as foreign policy expert Josef Braml has pointed out in his book "The Transatlantic Illusion." But they want to delay this break until they feel strong enough to withstand US pressure.

There are tactical differences about this. In all Germany's political parties and in the business community, there are representatives who advocate an immediate break with the US and believe the current war against Russia is wrong. They are particularly strongly represented in the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and in the wing of the Left Party headed by Sarah Wagenknecht, which tries to pass off advocacy of an independent German-European great power policy as a "peace policy."

The blowing up of the Nord Stream pipelines confirms that the US will stop at nothing in pursuit of its imperialist goals. But its partners and rivals in Germany are in no way inferior to it in this. With the revival of German militarism, they are more and more openly following in the footsteps of Hitler's Wehrmacht (armed forces) and the Nazis, who committed the worst crimes in human history.

The struggle against imperialism and war requires the building of an international movement of the working class that advocates the overthrow of capitalism and a socialist program. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International are fighting for.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)