

Germany: The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the poison of militarism

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Hardly a day passes without the chief commentator of the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Stefan Kornelius, agitating against Russia and calling for “tougher action” against the Putin regime. What infuriates him the most is that his warmongering finds so little resonance in the general population.

On Thursday evening, broadcaster ARD released the results of a lightning poll on the Ukraine conflict. It shows that 82 percent of respondents rejected the use of military force. The deployment of US warships and F-16 fighter aircraft to the region has only served to strengthen anti-war sentiment in Germany.

The comments of Kornelius and others are aimed at breaking this resistance to war. They are directly related to the foreign policy turn of the German government, which declared last month that the period of military restraint was finally over. Germany, the line goes, is too big and economically powerful to limit itself in world politics to restraint, military grovelling and free-loading. Regardless of the millions of war dead and the crimes of the Nazi dictatorship, Germany must again defend its interests militarily around the world.

The escalation of the crisis in Ukraine is being used to conduct a media barrage against widespread anti-war attitudes.

On Friday, Kornelius wrote a comment directed against what he considers the weak and hesitant sanctions announced by the EU. The headline was “Like poison in the bloodstream”. The choice of words is revealing. In fact, it is his ceaseless propaganda for military intervention that aims to pump the venom of militarism into the bloodstream of society.

Kornelius described the European reaction so far as totally inadequate. The quest for a political solution to the conflict is perceived by Putin as a weakness, he

wrote. The political offers directed at Moscow are having the opposite effect to what is intended. It had long “become clear that Putin disdains political deals”, Kornelius wrote.

The commenter added that “Russia’s violation of the rules” is “so blatant that it is hard to imagine a political solution”. He does not say it openly, but the demand for a military solution permeates every sentence.

Russian actions suffocate “any hope of mediation through the force of argument”, he writes. Then he warns against the “fear of a further escalation”. Note he does not warn *of* a further escalation, but of the *fear* of one. He ends with the statement: “Those who write off the country’s territorial integrity, capitulate to the crudeness of the injustice.”

Where was the defence of “territorial integrity” when the German government financed, built and encouraged right-wing and openly fascist parties in Ukraine to take action against the elected government in Kiev?

Kornelius belongs to a group of journalists who are closely linked with the US administration and who for many years have defended American war policy. Nothing was written about the “crudeness of the injustice” when, on the basis of lies and fabrications about alleged weapons of mass destruction, the United States invaded Iraq. As the US and European powers launched subsequent neo-colonial wars in Libya and Mali, and used mercenaries in Syria, the likes of Kornelius hailed these actions as struggles for democracy and the rule of law.

Berlin was one of the first governments to reject the state sovereignty of Yugoslavia immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, recognizing the national independence of Slovenia and Croatia, sparking a bloody war. The first international Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) mission of the postwar

period was directed against Serbia and had the goal of forcing the secession of Kosovo. There was no ink used in defence of territorial integrity at that time. On the contrary, the German government stoked up right-wing nationalist sentiments and fuelled national conflicts in order to strengthen its economic and political influence in the Balkans.

The actions in Ukraine stand in this tradition. The facts are known.

In Kiev, the German government is working with fascist parties whose German allies the government has sought to outlaw. On the web site of the fascist German National Party (NPD), Ukraine's Svoboda is hailed as "one of Europe's most significant right-wing parties." Svoboda, the German fascists note, is closely linked politically and organisationally with the British National Party (BNP), Hungary's Jobbik, Italy's Fiamma Tricolore and the French Front National (FN). In May last year, the NPD faction in the Saxony state legislature received and entertained a delegation from Svoboda.

Ten years ago, when Oleg Tyahnybok took over the leadership of Svoboda, he told his supporters in a speech, "Grab the guns, fight the Russian pigs, the Germans, the Jew-pigs and other vermin. Fight for our Ukrainian homeland!"

These are the allies of the German government. In recent months, Svoboda was the most important political force in the protests on the Maidan (Independence Square). Its fascist thugs played a key role in the overthrow of the government and the right-wing putsch in Kiev. In return, its leading cadre have been given influential government posts.

The co-founder of Svoboda, Andriy Parubiy, acted as a "security commander" during the protests and commanded the attacks of the Right Sector. Now he is Defence Minister and Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council. His deputy is Dmitry Yarosh, leader of the Right Sector. Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Sych is also a leading member of Svoboda, as is Oleg Machnitzki (Prosecutor General), Sergei Kvit (Minister of Education), Andrei Mokhnyk (Environment Minister) and Igor Shvaika (Minister of Agriculture).

The longtime chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, Elmar Brok (CDU, Christian Democratic Union), defended the

partnership with a fascist party whose hero, Stepan Bandera, supported the German invasion of the Ukraine in World War II and was involved in the murder of thousands of Jews. Bok describes Svoboda as a guarantor of the rule of law and democracy!

When questioned about these fascist tirades, Brok replied a few days ago: "The Svoboda party is not a party that I love, but it made it possible to force the exit of the person who persecuted and shot his own people. As long as it is ensured that this party is committed to the rule of law and makes possible democracy in Ukraine", support is justified. "This is, I think, what is decisive, not talk from the past."

This is also the position of Stefan Kornelius. He demands the recognition of this government because it serves the interests of German imperialism. Any resistance, however, is to be intimidated and suppressed—militarily, if necessary.

Like Brok, Kornelius, too, speaks for a wealthy upper-class layer that is determined to impose its interests with all available force and suppress any resistance with extreme brutality.



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