

Spiegel magazine agitates against the Germans' "fear of war"

By Peter Schwarz
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Ever since German President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen announced the "end of German military restraint" in carefully coordinated speeches at the beginning of the year, the media have been up in arms against the deep-rooted hostility to war within broad layers of the population. The latest edition of the newsweekly *Der Spiegel* represents the current pinnacle of this campaign.

The cover photo, which is displayed at every newspaper kiosk, is meant to intimidate. It shows a rifleman in a balaclava aiming directly at the reader, supposedly representing a member of the pro-Russian militia in Ukraine. Beneath it is the headline, "War in Europe?"

The lead story itself comprises an amalgam of lies, insinuations and half-truths. It summarises all the arguments directed by the editorial board scribblers against the widespread rejection of their own war propaganda.

The article in *Spiegel* was carefully discussed and elaborated: although it is hardly three pages long, it carries the bylines of nine authors. It is accompanied by an interview with Foreign Minister Steinmeier (Social Democratic Party, SPD)

It revolves around two lies that stand at the heart of the official war propaganda. The first is that the conflict in Ukraine was forced on the Western powers; Russia is the aggressor. According to Steinmeier, no one "could foresee how quickly we would slither into the most serious crisis since the end of the Cold War". The second lie runs that while the German population's "fear of war" is "understandable", it is hopelessly naïve and dangerous.

Right at the beginning, *Spiegel* sketches out what it calls a "fear-arousing scenario": "Diplomacy has failed so far, and Putin appears to have no fear of economic losses? What next? War? It would be madness, but since last week it is no longer unthinkable".

This sentence alone contains so many distortions that it is hard to know where to start.

Let us begin with the "diplomacy", which according to *Spiegel* has "failed". Do the authors mean by this the short meeting attended by the foreign ministers of Russia, Ukraine and the US, as well as the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, in Geneva on April 17? Meanwhile it is clear that the agreement reached there for all armed militias in Ukraine to disarm merely served to intensify the pressure on and provocations against Russia.

Not in its wildest dreams did the regime in Kiev intend to disarm the fascist militias, to whom it owes its own coming to power. It has since incorporated some of them into the official security forces, others continue to operate independently, under the protection of the army and the secret service, terrorising the population in east Ukraine. On the other hand, the Russian government is made responsible for all the activities of the groups opposing the regime in Kiev, although there is no proof that the Kremlin actually controls or influences them.

But even if these facts are ignored: Does *Spiegel* really want to tell its readers that a single meeting between four foreign ministers exhausts all diplomatic possibilities? If "a large war in Europe" really is "a possibility once again", as the *Spiegel* authors write, then would it not be necessary to develop diplomatic activities day and night to try and prevent such a catastrophe? That nothing like this is happening proves that Washington and Berlin have consciously provoked the crisis in Ukraine.

Foreign Minister Steinmeier's claim that no one could have foreseen "how quickly we would *slither* into the most serious crisis since the end of the Cold War" is very revealing in this context. The term originated with British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who in 1920 claimed that none of the leading figures of the day had wanted the First World War, but "slithered into it". This was enthusiastically seized upon in Germany and interpreted as an absolution of any war guilt. The historian Christopher Clark has adopted this motif, in the slightly modified form of *The Sleepwalkers*, the title of his recent book on the causes of the First World War. For this reason, he was enthusiastically celebrated in the German press.

At the end of January, Steinmeier sounded quite different. Speaking in parliament, he declared that Germany was "too large and too important" for it to abstain from involvement in the crisis regions and flashpoints of world politics. "As correct as the policy of military restraint is, it should not be misunderstood as a culture of abstention", he said.

In Ukraine, this new, aggressive foreign policy line was tried out in practice. Steinmeier's predecessor, Guido Westerwelle, had already engaged with the demonstrators in Kiev, who were demanding the resignation of the elected president, occupying government buildings, and collaborating with armed fascist militias. Steinmeier himself met repeatedly with opposition leaders, including the fascist leader Oleh Tyahnybok, and on the night of February 22, negotiated the agreement that gave the

starting shot for the putsch against President Yanukovich.

It was clear that a putsch regime, in which the fascists from Svoboda held key ministries and led by the Fatherland Party of prime minister Arseny Yatsenyuk, which celebrated the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera as well, would meet opposition in Ukraine. Nowhere else, with the exception of Poland, have so many people become victims of the Nazi war of extermination and the Holocaust.

Steinmeier's claim that no one could have foreseen this is a shameless lie. In reality, the provocation was intended and deliberate. As US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, with whom Steinmeier collaborates closely, has publicly admitted, America alone has invested \$5 billion in the Ukrainian opposition over the last 20 years in order to bring about a change of government. There is no record of the corresponding amounts paid by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Heinrich Böll Foundation of the Green Party, or the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of the SPD, which have all been highly active in Ukraine.

The provocative actions of Germany, the EU and the US are not only an attempt to bring the raw materials, fertile fields and cheap labour of the Ukraine under their control; they also want to push back and weaken Russia, whom they regard as an obstacle to their domination of the Eurasian landmass and the Middle East.

The German government is also intensifying the conflict with Russia because it wants to break the resistance to militarism through a sort of “war shock”. Berlin is using the Ukraine crisis in much the way the US administration responded to the attacks of September 11 2001: as a pretext for encouraging a constant war hysteria, and to build up the forces of the state at home and abroad. In this, the government is playing an exceedingly risky game, and accepts the risk of a Third nuclear World War.

This motif runs like a red thread through the article in *Der Spiegel*. Time and again, the Germans’ “pacifism”, the “love of peace” and the “fear of war” are criticised.

Germany is “a nation, which has been haunted by fears of war since 1945 in a particular way”, it says. “Rather accommodate than risk an armed conflict—that is the prevailing mood in the population.” And, “Three quarters of Germans are against a NATO military intervention. One third express understanding for Putin's annexation of Crimea. The fear of war is reflected in these figures too.”

The *Spiegel* authors describe this attitude not only as wrong, but also as morally questionable. “Ukraine is sliding into a civil war being fuelled by Russia. The West is responding with economic sanctions, nothing more”, they write. “For the Western Europeans this is not as bad as a war they must experience first hand, because it is the others who are dying. But it is also an unbearable situation to watch the killing on one’s own continent. Morally, it is no better than wielding the weapon yourself.”

At another point in the article, they quote the political scientist Herfried Münkler, who differentiates between “heroic” and “post-heroic” societies. “Post-heroism”, the *Spiegel* sums up Münkler’s position, “is also an expression of prosperity ... Those who have a lot, don’t want to put it at risk. In poorer societies, on the other hand, men would draw their pride from heroic ideals, and

would be therefore more easily won for a war.” By “heroic” societies, only one thing can be meant: the glorification of heroic death by the Nazis.

The demand that the Germans must at last overcome their “pacifism” and once more conduct war is reflected in numerous other editorials and lead articles in the German press. For example, on April 24, *Die Welt* published an editorial by the American historian Anne Appelbaum, entitled, “Germans, you must once again learn deterrence!”

Appelbaum writes that even if German politicians favour diplomacy over nuclear deterrence, the truth is different: “Even if Germany has forsworn violence, it does not mean that Russia has done the same. And just because the Germans uphold international law, doesn’t mean the Russians will. Russia is not only not interested in international law, Russia wants to destroy it.”

For this reason, diplomacy “cannot be the answer to these massive attacks”. What is more important is “that Europe makes NATO stronger so it can send troops to the eastern borders”. In order to defend its “exceptional prosperity”, Germany needs “more than only diplomacy”.

It is worth noting that since 1992 Appelbaum has been married to Polish Foreign Minister Radoslav Sikorski, who has worked in Ukraine most closely with his German counterpart Steinmeier. According to a report in the Polish weekly *Nie* (No), Sikorski had 86 members of the Ukrainian fascist militia “Right Sector” trained in a Polish police training centre last year.

The Stanford historian Ian Morris goes even further. He evaluates the slaughter of the First and Second World Wars positively. In the *Washington Post* of April 25, he published an article entitled, “In the long run, wars make us safer and richer”.

In it he calculates that in the Stone Age, 10 to 20 percent of all people were killed by other humans. The 100 million to 200 million victims of both World Wars, on the other hand, only constituted 1 to 2 percent of the 10 billion people that lived on earth during the course of the century. “War may well be the worst way imaginable to create larger, more peaceful societies, but the depressing fact is that it is pretty much the only way”, he concludes.

If one looks at the latest edition of *Spiegel*, then it is only a question of time before Mr. Morris can spew his fascistic filth—which like Hitler, regards mass murder as a way to refine the human race—in the editorial columns of the German press.

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