

Leading German newspaper says Russia should be threatened with nuclear war

By Peter Schwarz
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One day before the crisis meeting on Ukraine in Minsk, a leading German newspaper, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), published an editorial calling for NATO to militarily escalate the confrontation with Russia to the point of a nuclear attack.

The conservative newspaper appeared on Tuesday with a front-page commentary by its co-editor, Berthold Kohler, calling for a policy of “deterrence” against Russia up to the “highest level.”

Kohler accused German Chancellor Angela Merkel of shrinking “from delivering weapons to Kiev that could entangle the West in a proxy war,” even though Russian President Vladimir Putin was prepared “to escalate the dispute to the brink of a nuclear conflict.”

“If the West maintains its view that the conflict ‘cannot be solved militarily,’” Kohler warned, “then, in the worst case, the Kremlin could allow its ‘separatists’ to march to Kiev.”

He then posed the rhetorical question: “How can one deal with an aggressive and expansionist power that disregards the fundamental principles of peace in Europe?” The answer, he said, was “unpleasant but inevitable. Deterrence, all the way up to its highest level.”

Kohler clearly had nuclear weapons in mind, writing: “Would Putin have dared to occupy Crimea if Ukraine also possessed nuclear weapons?”

He left no doubt about his willingness to use such weapons. NATO had to make clear to the Kremlin, he wrote, “that any breach-of-area will be countered with a military response and the willingness of the West to go up the escalation ladder, in the worst case, even faster than the Russians.”

Kohler complained that, “of course, no one in the West speaks openly” of such scenarios, because they

contravene “the existing dogma of de-escalation.”

This is the unadulterated voice of German imperialism, heard previously in World War I and World War II. The FAZ publisher is willing to contemplate and threaten a nuclear war that would cost billions of lives and very likely spell the end of human civilization.

Advocating such a strategy has vast implications. Constantly ratcheting up political and military tensions amid the NATO escalation in Eastern Europe right up to the borders of Russia, it makes the outbreak of a conflict that could escalate to a nuclear conflagration ever more likely.

To what end? On this, Kohler has little to say. Instead, he turns reality upside down in the manner pioneered by Hitler’s propaganda chief, Goebbels.

His assertion that Russia is “an aggressive and expansionist power” is a grotesque distortion of the situation. Since the dissolution of USSR in 1991, NATO has systematically encircled Russia. Almost all of the Eastern European countries that were once allied with the Soviet Union and the former Soviet Baltic republics have become members of the Western military alliance. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are next on the list.

Russia has also lost many international allies due to wars carried out by the US and NATO in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa.

Even more bizarre is Kohler’s assertion that the West maintains a “dogma of de-escalation.” Since the first Iraq War in 1991, the US and its allies have bombed Yugoslavia, occupied Afghanistan, attacked and destroyed Iraq and Libya, fomented a civil war in Syria, and conducted numerous other acts of aggression.

The crisis in Ukraine was deliberately provoked by

the Western powers. According to US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, Washington spent \$5 billion to finance opposition forces in Ukraine. Berlin has worked closely with forces such as the Svoboda Party and the Fatherland Party of Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk that venerate Stepan Bandera and other World War II Nazi collaborators.

The Western intervention set off alarms in Moscow and eastern Ukraine. The incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation, supported by the majority of the local population, and pro-Russian separatist rebellion in eastern Ukraine were reactions to the violent coup in Kiev sponsored and supported by the Western powers.

For the German elite, the coup in Ukraine was the trial run for the aggressive foreign policy announced by President Gauck and other government officials a few weeks earlier. The policy is entirely in line with the traditional thrust of German imperialist expansion. German troops occupied Ukraine during both world wars of the last century.

From the beginning, FAZ and its co-editor Kohler were among the most avid supporters of this aggressive policy, working relentlessly to stoke up pro-war sentiment. When in early March the Crimean parliament defied Ukraine, Kohler criticized so-called “doves” who advocated moderation, as well as “hawks” who “showed the Russian bear only trimmed claws.”

He called for the use of military force, writing: “The free world... has no other choice than to draw clear boundaries and secure them with the means of deterrence. This is the only language understood by Putin.”

When NATO last April approved a massive program of rearmament in Eastern Europe, Kohler was dissatisfied. “Not only the EU, but also NATO likes to talk a thousand times before it shoots,” he raved.

That Kohler now contemplates a nuclear escalation of the conflict must be taken as a warning. Illusions that the representatives of the ruling class will come to their senses and pull back from a policy leading to nuclear annihilation are dangerously misplaced. They are responding to growing social tensions and mounting conflicts between the great powers by preparing ever-greater crimes.

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