

German Official Warns of War As Kiev Presses Its Attack

by Nancy Spannaus

Jan. 19—Gernot Erler, the German government coordinator for Russia, ended an otherwise standard speech last week, which was otherwise devoted to papering over tensions in Berlin over continuing sanctions and conflict with Russia, with a stark warning that funds from the West should not flow into financing Kiev's military attack on eastern Ukraine.

At a public event held Jan. 15 in the Bundestag (parliament), Erler stated, "We rule out a military solution to the conflict." Although states have a right to defend their sovereignty with military means, "this is not just a conflict in the region. It is in the meantime a conflict of worldwide importance." We will do everything possible "to prevent an attempt from being made again to solve this problem by military means."

Russian President Vladimir Putin will absolutely not allow the separatists to be militarily defeated, he said, and if a military solution is attempted, "that is the only version of possible events that could lead to Gorbachov's horror vision of the moment"—referring to Gorbachov's warning, in his Jan. 9 *Der Spiegel* interview, of the threat of nuclear war, a view which Erler otherwise doesn't support. "But, should there be a serious attempt with support by certain European countries, or from outside of Europe, to end the whole thing with a military solution, then I don't rule out this version."

This is an extraordinary admission, and warn-

ing, by a German government official. The question is: Will it be heeded in time?

Kiev Escalates Assault

Erler's warning has been flagrantly ignored by the backers of the Kiev regime in NATO and the U.S. While "talking the talk" of restarting consultations among the convenors of the Minsk contact group, the Nazi-laced government now controlling Ukraine is putting itself on an ever-more-intense war footing, vowing to take back the southeastern region of the country by force of arms.



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Gernot Erler, Germany's special coordinator for Russia policy, warned against Western financing for Kiev's attack on eastern Ukraine: "We rule out a military solution to the conflict," he said.

Under these conditions, consultations among representatives of Russia, Germany, France, and Ukraine in Berlin have been unable to reach any agreements, and the fighting in the region has escalated on a daily basis.

The rise of violence in the Donbass region, especially around the Donetsk airport, led Putin on Jan. 15 to send a personal message to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, suggesting that “both parties—the Ukrainian military and the Donbass, DPR [Donetsk People’s Republic] and the LPR [Lugansk People’s Republic], take urgent measures to stop shelling each other’s positions and pull out weapons of over 100 mm caliber.” The call was reported on Russia’s Channel 1 TV.

Tass reported Jan. 18 that Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Poroshenko had rejected the proposal.

On that same day, Poroshenko was participating in a march of over 10,000 in Kiev, attempting to rally the population behind Kiev’s renewed military offensive, using the symbol of the shelling of a civilian bus Jan. 13, in which 13 civilians died, and claiming that the militias were responsible.

The Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring mission in the area has determined that the shelling of the bus came from the north-north-east. The Russian Permanent Representative at the OSCE told Tass that this determination disproved allegations that the militias were to blame for the tragedy.

There is no disagreement, however, about the reality of the escalation of the armed conflict. Ukrainian forces loyal to Kiev have been engaged in a drive to take back control of the Donetsk airport, which both sides have claimed as their own, according to the Minsk agreements of last Fall. Civilian areas are being heavily hit in the bombardments. Today, the DPR accused the regime of heavy shelling of residential areas in and around Donetsk, while the regime side claimed 100 attacks on its forces and civilian areas by the DPR’s forces.

Local militia leader Aleksandr Zakharchenko reported regime airstrikes in Gorlovka using 500 kg bombs. “It was not targeted bombing because of clouds; they just dropped bombs on the town,” he said, adding that more than 30 people, including children, were either killed or wounded in this air strike.

Poroshenko advisor Yury Biriukov wrote on his Facebook page, Jan. 18, “We will show now how we can kick them in the teeth.”

Russian Reaction

Moscow has urged Kiev and militias of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics to withdraw heavy weaponry from the conflict zone, Russia’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement Jan. 19. The statement went on to reference Putin’s letter to Poroshenko, noting that it had been sent in response to a request from the Ukrainian side, and to specify the weaponry withdrawal schedule contained in the working document of Nov. 13, 2014, the fulfilment of which was urged by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry in its statement of Jan. 18, the Russian ministry said.

Immediate action is needed, the ministry said.

The Foreign Ministry also blasted the European press for its distorted coverage of the southeastern Ukraine events, commenting specifically on the Euronews TV channel’s coverage of the latest events.

The coverage has been “lopsided,” the Foreign Ministry said, according to Tass. “Civilian deaths caused by the shelling by the Ukrainian army and the assessments of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which is presenting new reports about the situation in eastern Ukraine, are being hushed up.” The ministry added that Euronews had practically ignored the conclusions contained in an OSCE report which had, in effect, refuted the West’s hasty allegations that the militias were to blame for the bus shelling near Volnovakha.

German official Erler’s remarks are significant evidence that Western Europe is by no means united behind the British-U.S.-NATO policy of confrontation with Russia, a fact that President Barack Obama is painfully aware of. While the European Union has decided, as recently as its meeting today, that it will not relax sanctions against Russia at this time, it has also refused to expand those sanctions, as the Obama Administration has done.

At the same time, voices for abandoning the current confrontation strategy are becoming more loudly heard. French President François Hollande and German Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel were already on record opposing that strategy, before the Jan. 7 terror attacks in Paris, but in the wake of those attacks, more French leaders are putting squarely on the table the need for France to change its alliances in the world.

Lyndon LaRouche has noted that French institutions are responding effectively in the current crisis, in contrast to those in Germany, where the Merkel govern-



Russian Presidential Press & Information Office

French President Hollande made an impromptu visit to Moscow in December, in defiance of the U.S.-U.K.-German confrontational stance against Russia. Shown: Hollande and President Putin meet in Moscow Dec. 6, 2014.

ment is responding fearfully to the re-emergence of Nazism in Ukraine, and toeing the suicidal British-American line.

Eurasia Is a Reality

A change in Franco-Russian relations has begun to be debated in the media. Comments made in an interview with the Russian daily *Kommersant* by French Ambassador to Russia Jean-Maurice Ripert (not known as pro-Russian) confirm that there's something going on. The paper writes in its kicker to the article: "Paris does not want to accept the split between Europe and Russia, says French Ambassador to Russia Jean-Maurice Ripert: 'We do not want to put up with the split—the fact that Russia will move away from Europe, or Europe from Russia. I do not mind the concept of Eurasia—it is a reality. Russia is a bridge between Europe and Asia. And, of course, Russia belongs to Europe,' Ripert told *Kommersant* in an interview published Jan. 15 and reported in English by Sputnik International."

"For us, the tragedy that is happening in Ukraine is unacceptable. The humanitarian situation in Donbass is disastrous," Ripert is quoted saying. "This cannot continue. France and Germany, along with Russia, have a relationship of trust with the parties to the conflict, and will be able to convince them to find a solution." Russia and Europe "will not return the past," referring to a new Cold War. He added that Moscow and Paris are continuing to cooperate in international affairs, including

in the fight against terrorism and the conflict in Syria.

The well-informed Dedefensa website, run by a Frenchman in Belgium, also reports that over the last few weeks and months, the Russians have changed their view as to who is their main ally in Europe. "Since this Autumn," Russia has "abandoned all hope for the time being that [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel would play that role with them, and especially since the impromptu surprise visit of Hollande to Moscow in December (at the request of Hollande), they have turned towards France. They have not forgotten, in this respect, the role Hollande played during the D-Day celebrations in Normandy."

Dedefensa quotes from an interview with Prof. Kyrill Koktysh on Radio Sputnik, reported by Sputnik News on Dec. 13, shortly before Putin and Hollande met at Vnutkovo airport outside Moscow. Koktysh, associate professor at the Institute of International Relations of the Russian Foreign Ministry, told Sputnik: "It was Hollande who was brave enough to start the Normandy process, when the first negotiations between Putin and Poroshenko took place. And he can continue his line. As it is seen from Moscow, Germany starts speaking in the name of [the whole of] Europe and France is not satisfied with this, because the French interests are a bit different than the German ones. That means that Hollande is motivated to retain for France the status of a strong European power with its own voice, without the German accent and with the clear French language."

Also taking part in this interview, independent expert Dmitry Yakushkin said that the present French position "reminds me of the role France tried to play in the 1960s. It tried to regain its prewar glory and positioned itself as a country between the East and the West. I worked in France for many years, and if you look at European countries like Great Britain, Germany, even Spain or Italy, France was always a country which didn't resemble the others. It was not exactly a capitalist country, it was not exactly a Western country and sometimes I had a feeling that [then-President] Mr. de Gaulle was considered to be practically like the Soviet leader. We were very mild in criticizing France for its internal problems, for its social problems."