



PETER BEYER

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Let us start right in here, Peter. This started on February 24, and it has been a strain on the entire world, certainly on Europe and of course its most populous and affluent member, Germany. That is particularly within your government, in place since December, which was confronted with this war right away. Germany has been somewhat criticized in Europe and beyond, for not doing enough, not stepping up to the plate and sending the necessary equipment that Ukraine needs. Give us a sense of the view from Berlin at this particular moment.

Peter Beyer

Thank you very much. I am delighted to be here with this exceptional panel. To your question, by the way, I am now in the opposition because we lost, so I am no longer the Transatlantic Coordinator, that was a government position I enjoyed for four years. We are 10 months into this war and the German government, certainly like many others, never expected anything like that to happen, to have an on-the-ground conventional war in Europe, so no one was really prepared. Although, I have to admit, there was sufficient intelligence months before that nobody really should have been surprised by the time February 24 arrived, that Russia actually invaded Ukraine. There was a lot of material, satellite pictures, etc., that we had intelligence briefings on, so it is something like surprise, surprise, we woke up to a war by the end of February this year; I do not buy that. However, with a new German government just having come into the office two or three months earlier, of course, it found them completely unprepared. I think everybody needs to understand that apart from political party issues, and I am not part of that government anymore, for Germany it was a complete confrontation with its core principles. We had to make a decision to do a 180-degree turnaround with regard to delivering weapons at all, be it normal or heavy weaponry, all the way up to battle tanks. We have not yet delivered the tanks by the way, for which I criticized my government for not doing enough. However, one of our core principles was not to deliver any kind of weapons to any conflict or war zone.

With regards to our history in Ukraine in the Second World War, where the German Wehrmacht, the army back then killed millions of Ukrainians, it was difficult for us to be the first to deliver weapons to Ukraine. However, I do not buy that we are still lagging behind. Six months ago, we should have made the right political decisions quickly, like delivering heavy weaponry and air space defense, which we have now done. I keep hearing this narrative and which my American friends confronted me with earlier this week when I was in Washington DC for three days. The administration and my friends on the Hill and both sides of the US Congress, who were in session just a month after the mid-term elections, were asking me whether there was a German



problem. They appreciate that we are now delivering, but the narrative is that if we also deliver the Leopard 2, which the Ukrainians desperately want and I think they need, it takes a lot of training, maintenance, and ammunition. That is exactly why we should have decided to deliver them half a year ago because we know it takes a lot of time. It is not easy, but we have enough of these battle tanks, which could make a difference in that war.

We should never forget who caused all this, it is Putin's Russia, the dictator hiding behind the Kremlin's walls, who initiated this completely unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. You were quite right Ali when you said in your introductory remarks that it is not only an aggression against the Ukrainians, which would be bad enough, it is an aggression against all of us. Or it is at least an aggression against all those who believe in universal values like the rule of law, democracy, and human rights, etc. The Ukrainians are defending our core values on Ukrainian territory so, for me, it is absolutely a no brainer to make quick and right decisions, and to support Ukraine as much as we can, to get them to a strong position. There cannot be peace negotiations now.

Ali Aslan

Clear and very stern words from Peter Beyer as far as the German perspective is concerned. Of course, we are here today to discuss the future of the European Union and European security after the war in Ukraine.