

German Gen. Kujat: Talk to Russians, Not About Them

April 25—Former Bundeswehr Chief of the General Staff Gen. Harald Kujat (ret.) has been very outspoken about the Ukraine crisis in recent weeks, urging Germany to reject sanctions and work with Russia to find solutions. He told Bavaria 2 Radio on April 16:

Before the Crimea annexation, NATO offered no contribution to calm the situation. NATO could have done this. And, after the Crimea annexation, with certain statements, it actually added to the escalation of the crisis rather than to de-escalation. We heard too many different voices from the Western camp that talk about Russia but don't talk with Russia. No. NATO should have, from the beginning, from the first day, should have become active, because NATO has a strategic partnership with Russia and in the Fundamental Principles Treaty, upon which this Partnership is based, it is stated explicitly that in situations where the security interests of both sides come into question or differences of opinion come up, the NATO-Russia Council must convene to solve this problem through consultation. That can take place at the level of the foreign ministers, it can be at the level of the heads of governments. And that is what NATO didn't do.

General Kujat participated in a round-table discussion on the Maybrit Illner TV talk show on April 24, challenging the German government, as a NATO member, to demand the immediate convening of the NATO-Russia Council. He pointed out that NATO is comprised of its member-states, and that defending its

own members is one thing, but everything else is “escalation rhetoric”—a reference to recent provocative remarks by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Here is an excerpt from the discussion.

Illner: Will Putin and the West wait for internal solutions [in Ukraine]?

Kujat: No. The longer the West temporizes and does nothing, and certainly, the longer it tries to control this crisis with sanctions or by “showing the fleet” in the Baltic Sea, the more time Putin has to let things

ripen and to use it for his own purposes. The West must come out concretely with proposals for what a solution would look like. It must declare that Ukraine is in no condition to become a NATO member, and won't be for a long time, nor can NATO accept it as a member, as it is in no position to guarantee the security of this country.

We are also prepared to talk about the future of Ukraine. Naturally there is a solution, as we have seen in the past. Czechoslovakia was separated into two states, voluntarily and without difficulty, without civil war. Why shouldn't that be possible in Ukraine? Or why couldn't there

be a federal system? Why isn't a federal system that is good for Germany not also be good for Ukraine? Why should it not function in Ukraine? And above all, in such a federal system, it must be clear that minority rights must also be guaranteed, and not only for Russians. There is a strong Polish minority in Ukraine, and other minorities that are not so big... Why shouldn't that be possible? But above all the West has to finally pry itself out of its armchair, and stand up and approach Putin, and with proposals.

If we proceed further with sanctions, then we are only hurting ourselves. A country like Russia can much more easily deal with sanctions than we can, and at this very moment we are in the process of destroying all the economic connections with Russia which we have built up over many, many years, the trust we have developed, and threatening jobs in Germany. This isn't crisis management, it is a declaration of political bankruptcy!



Retired Gen. Harald Kujat, former head of the Bundeswehr.