

German government statement on the Bundeswehr mission in Afghanistan

The Chancellor's lies

Ulrich Rippert
23 April 2010

Seven German soldiers have been killed in combat in the last two weeks in Afghanistan. Amidst growing popular opposition to the war, Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) delivered a government statement to parliament yesterday, in which she once again justified the deployment of Germany's Bundeswehr (armed forces), saying there was "no alternative".

Her speech to the members of parliament was a collection of propaganda phrases, distortions and outright lies. It served to politically prepare a military offensive against the Taliban in northern Afghanistan, which had been announced the day before by the commander of the allied forces, US General Stanley McChrystal, during a visit to Berlin.

Merkel began her speech with a quote from former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (Social Democratic Party, SPD). At the swearing in of young soldiers, Schmidt had said the recruits were very lucky, because they served a country that pursued only peaceful objectives. His words, "this state will never abuse you," retained its full validity, said Merkel.

The reference to Helmut Schmidt is instructive in several respects. To counter growing antiwar sentiment, at the outset of her speech, Merkel made it clear that she is basing herself on an alliance with the social democrats. Against the opposition to war in the population, she counterposes the grand coalition of the war parties.

This is why Merkel, or her speechwriters, invoke Schmidt, because his promise that the soldiers would not be abused is currently so obviously being broken. For eight years, Bundeswehr soldiers were and are being sent to Afghanistan on the basis of completely false and misleading war aims. The soldiers and the people were and are being systematically lied to.

For years it was claimed this was a mission to "rebuild" Afghanistan. The use of the Bundeswehr in Afghanistan was intended solely to further the economic development of the country and secure the development of democratic and constitutional structures militarily, it was claimed. There was no talk of "war". In the decisions of the Bundestag (parliament) that extended the Afghanistan mandate each year, the term

"war" cannot be found. Although the number of foreign soldiers was increased to 130,000, and thousands of Afghan civilians were killed, the operation was continually referred to as a "security and development mission".

In her speech yesterday, Merkel too tried to maintain the myth of a reconstruction mission. However, this is becoming increasingly difficult given the escalation of the war and the growing number of soldiers who have been killed. Therefore, Merkel said she had great sympathy, "when soldiers on the spot spoke of a civil war, or just of war."

What a cowardly argument! As if it were not the government that says how the military action should be assessed, what aims it pursues and the means by which it is waged. It deploys the army, employing euphemisms and false information. If soldiers then say, "Wait a minute, we are in a battle here, we are perceived as an occupying army, the enemy gets more and more support from the indigenous population, the attacks on us are growing stronger, we have to kill more often and our own losses are growing, we are at war here," then the government responds: "We understand your view of things. But we cannot openly talk about occupation and colonial war, as this would not be accepted by the population."

The second of the Chancellor's lies is: "Our fallen soldiers gave their lives for freedom, the rule of law and democracy."

According to the UN, since the war began about 50,000 people have lost their lives in Afghanistan. A heavily armed occupation, equipped with modern weapons, is rampaging against the population of an underdeveloped country. What does this have to do with freedom?

Merkel described the rule of law as the "most precious asset of the people" and referred to her negative experience in the former East Germany. But in Afghanistan, the Bundeswehr is supporting a completely corrupt puppet regime. The election last summer was clearly manipulated. The brother of President Karzai is on the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency and is also a key figure in the drugs trade. Drug production reached a new record last year with 9,000 tons of raw opium. So much for the rule of law.

On the question of democracy, Merkel contradicted herself. It

was unrealistic to strive for “western-style democracy” in Afghanistan, she said. Instead, even bodies such as the Loya Jirga should be recognized as legitimate social institutions. In other words, the archaic forms of a medieval tribal society should be retained.

In this context, Merkel stressed repeatedly that she supported the new Afghanistan strategy that was adopted in January at a conference in London. This strategy provides for closer cooperation with local rulers, including “moderate Taliban”, which Merkel described as “handing over the responsibility.” In truth, the new strategy means a strengthening of regional clan leaders and warlords. It will plunge the country into a permanent tribal and civil war, even more paralyzing than before. The constant manipulation of regional conflicts places the country permanently at the mercy of imperialist interests. What the Chancellor referred to as a “self-supporting security structure” is actually the oldest tactic of imperial colonial policy: divide and rule.

But it is not only the Afghanistan strategy that is a mockery of democratic conditions. Even at home, the government has made it clear what it thinks of democracy. It continues to prosecute a war with brute force that is opposed by over 70 percent of the population.

The third of the Chancellor’s lies was that the war in Afghanistan serves to promote German security. Once again she relied on the social democrats to provide the evidence. She quoted the former SPD Defence Minister Peter Struck, who claimed that German security was being defended in the Hindu Kush. “Today, no one has more clearly, accurately and aptly expressed what is at stake in Afghanistan”, rang Merkel’s praise.

A glance at the map shows that the geographic position of the country, which borders Pakistan and Iran, has great importance for international security policy, the Chancellor continued. In Afghanistan, dangerous terrorists were being trained, and in the neighbouring countries there was a risk that terrorists might gain possession of nuclear weapons or nuclear material to build “dirty bombs”.

What she did not say, was that the intensification and expansion of the war over the past eight years has not improved the security situation in the region but has significantly worsened it.

In this context, the statements of some soldiers in the recent issues of *Der Spiegel* newsweekly are very interesting. The 30-year-old captain Jan S., whose battalion of paratroopers was ambushed on Good Friday, suffering three deaths, compared the current deployment with an earlier one three years before: “At that time, we were able to move about outside the vehicles amongst the people. Today, everything is different. In our briefing in early April, several parts of our operational zone were marked on the maps as no-go areas. That’s frustrating for my men and me.”

Without saying it openly, this statement makes clear that the

military operation has achieved the opposite of what is being claimed by the Chancellor and her arrogant defence minister in their hypocritical war propaganda.

Merkel made an important point in her policy statement in a short sentence, saying she did not want to, nor could she, talk about the events of the years 1989 and 1990. At that time, Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan after a ten-year operation in which heavy losses occurred.

The reason that Merkel does not want to speak about the history of the country is not difficult to understand. She would have to talk about how Al Qaeda and various Islamist militias were set up by the CIA in the 1980s, and were armed by the US to fight Soviet troops. She would have to speak about the then presidential security adviser (1977-1981) and current Obama adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who in his books attributes a key role to the control of the “Eurasian landmass” —here again referring to Afghanistan—in the defence of American world domination. Or she would have to declare that the war against those in power in Kabul had been planned long before the attacks of September 11, 2001; that under no circumstances will Berlin accept sole US control in the region, and that for decades Germany has maintained close economic and political relations with the various governments in Afghanistan.

In short, if Merkel were to discuss this history it would be clear that the current military operation is a colonial war of conquest. But this should not be said openly under any circumstances.

In the debate following the government declaration, SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel placed himself fully on the side of the Chancellor. He merely warned against talking openly of war. If you abandoned the current propaganda, it would be much harder to justify the war to the population, he said.

Even Jürgen Trittin of the Green Party supported the Chancellor, but took the opposite position. He urged the government to drop all the euphemisms and call the war openly by its name.

As spokesperson for the Left Party, Gregor Gysi, criticized the war and cited some UN statistics showing that talk of economic and social reconstruction were completely false. But Gysi too said not a word about the real nature of this colonial war. Given the growing resistance in the population, the Left Party plays the role of a political safety valve in the Bundestag. Its criticism is to keep the opposition under control, and politically sidelined. Thus, the Left Party forms the critical left flank of the war coalition.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact