

German imperialism seeks a share in Libyan war spoils

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As fighting rages in Tripoli, German imperialism is seeking to position itself for a share in the spoils anticipated after the fall of the Gaddafi regime.

In addition to Libya's rich energy reserves, German companies are particularly interested in the billions of euros of government assets that have been frozen in foreign accounts. They sense the possibility of big returns. Business federations have emphasized that Germany should not be left out when it comes to the reconstruction of Libya.

On Monday the German Development Minister Dirk Niebel (Free Democratic Party) announced that he would provide up to seven million euros for emergency aid, in particular to ensure maintenance of the energy and water supply. In return, he said, when the oil and gas production starts up again, Libya could purchase all that it needs for its further development from Germany.

Also on Monday Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle (FDP) stressed in a special television broadcast, Germany's willingness to aid Libya in its "reconstruction". He noted that Libya is a rich country. Seven billion euros of Libyan funds are currently frozen in German accounts. Westerwelle announced that he had already been on the phone with his American and British counterparts to urge the "unfreezing" of those funds as quickly as possible to make them available to the National Transitional Council, the imperialist-backed opposition in Libya.

Large sections of the German media and political establishment now conclude that Germany made a serious mistake in March when it abstained in the United Nations Security Council resolution used as a pretext for war. Germany did not take part in the NATO military mission.

Spiegel Online writes: "Instead of taking part in the tyrant's fall, the federal government preferred to play the role of head teacher. Now ... it turns out that the assessment of western partners was correct and that of the

federal government terribly wrong."

The credibility of Germany as a reliable partner in the Western alliance has been harmed, the editors worry. At the same time, the outcome of the conflict demonstrates "who has the say in Europe—it is not Germany, but rather France," *Spiegel Online* complains. The federal government could now "not avoid sending people and material to Libya—and not just a few".

This view is shared by Defense Minister Thomas de Maizière (Christian Democratic Union). He emphasized recently his readiness to send German troops to Libya in order to support the establishment of a regime acceptable to the Western powers. If such a request were made to the German army, "we will examine it constructively," he told the *Rheinische Post*.

While the capture of Tripoli this week is generally presented as the product of a democratic uprising, the major powers are well aware that the success of the "rebels" was due entirely to the military intervention of NATO, which bombed troops loyal to Gaddafi and deployed special operations forces, thereby seriously contravening both the UN resolution on Libya and international law.

In its editorial on Tuesday, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* acknowledged that the increased NATO air strikes were critical to the unexpectedly rapid advance of the rebels on Tripoli. On their own, the insurgents "would not have made the breakthrough, military experts discreetly reveal. Even more silence surrounds the role played by French, British and American special forces, which supported the actions of the rebels on the ground."

The fact that Germany was not involved in this colonial crime from the beginning is now a source of bitter regret in Berlin. Due to its failure to pay a price in the form of military intervention and the blood of its soldiers, the German government now fears it has little chance to reap rewards from Libya in the form of trade and oil. This is

why the administration is now considering the deployment of German troops.

De Maizière, who is regarded as a possible successor to Chancellor Angela Merkel, took over the post of defense minister in early March from Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (Christian Social Union), who was brought down by a scandal involving plagiarism.

Westerwelle's decision to abstain from voting on the Libya resolution in the Security Council was already subject to widespread criticism at the time. The attack came from some members of the governing parties, but in particular from leading members of the Social Democratic Party, the Greens and business associations. Abroad, the decision was criticized by Germany's NATO partners—the US and France.

Since then, de Mazière has worked feverishly to secure an about turn in the government's stance regarding Libya. Without informing parliament, he promised last month to support NATO with the supply of ammunition. The NATO Logistics Agency had asked all NATO member states for "technology and components for bombs and other military equipment". Although no specific request had been made to Germany, the German Defense Minister responded immediately.

When criticized for his decision, de Maizière responded by saying that the request was a normal process and "everyday alliance business". "This is a normal procedure, just as we are prepared to provide air bases in Germany for NATO missions", he said.

In response to a parliamentary question regarding the duties carried out by Bundeswehr soldiers, the Defense Ministry also admitted that eleven German air force members were active at the NATO headquarters in Italy, carrying out duties including the selection of targets for air attacks on Libya.

De Maizière promptly rejected any criticism. It had not been necessary to provide information to the parliament, he said, and if Germany has acted any differently, it would have had to withdraw from NATO.

It has also now emerged that the elite fighting force of the Federal Police, the GSG9, is active in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi, headquarters of the NTC. The elite team is protecting the German liaison office in the rebel stronghold.

Already back in June, de Maizière had indicated that Germany was ready to send troops following the possible overthrow of Gaddafi. Last Friday, he told *Spiegel Online*: "In the future there will be no sort of German exceptionalism, neither in the EU nor with regard to our

other alliance partners."

The chairman of the Munich Security Conference, Wolfgang Ischinger, who has had a long career in the diplomatic service, also intervened in the debate. Germany had many opportunities to help Libya "on the road to democracy", Ischinger told German radio. It could help improve the country's trading links with the European Union. Ischinger also refused to rule out a German military operation in Libya should the country's rival factions continue fighting after the toppling of Gaddafi.

The Bundeswehr would take over duties of an occupying army in Libya, as it has done in Afghanistan. In that country, international troops have been trying for ten years to "stabilize" the puppet government of Hamid Karzai, proceeding with great brutality against the population and insurgents.

Now the same prospect confronts German troops in Libya. The task of the Bundeswehr is to protect the puppet regime drawn up by Western powers. Given the intense conflicts within the NTC, which recently culminated in the assassination of its military commander Abdel Fatah Yunis, the outbreak of open civil war between the country's different factions and tribes is on the agenda.

De Mazière is seeking to ensure the German army is involved in a military occupation in order to take part in the division of the spoils. The Defense Minister, whose father, Ulrich de Mazière, was an Inspector General in the Bundeswehr, spoke quite openly about this in the previously cited interview with the *Rheinische Post*.

The United Nations would play an important future role in global security and defense and is "dependent on countries that are ready to take up military responsibility", he said. So far, that had not been the case in Germany "due to its historical background", but that will change.

When asked what that meant for the soldiers, de Maizière responded: "We are talking once again about courage, coping with dying and killing."



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