

Ex-German chancellor Gerhard Schröder and international law

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At a podium discussion organised by the news magazine *Die Zeit* last Sunday in Hamburg, Germany, former Social Democratic Party (SPD) Chancellor Gerhard Schröder stated, “of course what is happening in Crimea is in breach of international law.” He thereby gave his firm backing to the German government and its international allies, who are justifying their aggressive actions in the Ukraine crisis with the claim that Russia is violating international law in Crimea.

At the same time, however, Schröder did not want to condemn his friend, Russian President Vladimir Putin. The former chancellor admitted that he had also acted in breach of international law. “We sent our planes to Serbia and they bombed a sovereign state together with NATO, without the existence of a resolution from the security council,” said Schröder.

This is a remarkable statement from the former German chancellor. It shows the level of double standards and criminality with which the imperialist powers impose their strategic and political interests. They act according to the motto, “Whatever serves our interests is legal, who or whatever stands in their way is illegal.”

Schröder is referring to the bombing campaign conducted by NATO on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which at the time still consisted of Serbia and Montenegro. Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia had previously split from Yugoslavia in bloody conflicts and with the active support of the German government.

Between March 24 and June 10, 1999, NATO implemented one of its largest ever air war operations, with the deployment of over 1,000 warplanes. In the process, the Serbian capital Belgrade was bombarded. As Schröder now admits, the war breached international law and was a war crime as a result. It

went ahead without the agreement of the United Nations since Russia used its veto in the Security Council.

Germany took part in the war against Yugoslavia at the initiative of Schröder, who was chancellor at the time, together with his Green Party foreign minister Joschka Fischer. It was the first foreign military intervention by the German army since Hitler’s defeat in World War II.

The pretext for the war with Yugoslavia was the alleged massacre of Kosovo Albanians by Serbs. At the time, Kosovo was an autonomous province and clearly belonged to Serbia under international law. In fact, for a long time NATO had supported the Kosovo Liberation Army (UKK), a militant, armed nationalist organisation that enjoyed close ties to organised crime. From January 1998, the UKK led an armed struggle against Yugoslavian forces, in which there were horrific acts on both sides.

NATO practically enforced Kosovo’s separation from Yugoslavia with the war, first as a protectorate of the United Nations, and since 2008 as an independent state.

Schröder remains silent on the fact that the German government and its allies are now directly drawing on this illegal policy in Ukraine. It is not Russia who is in breach of international law in Ukraine, but rather the Western powers. For months they have been aggressively undermining the country’s national sovereignty to impose their interests.

When Ukraine’s elected President Viktor Yanukovitch abandoned the signing of an association agreement with the European Union (EU) last November, Washington and Berlin mobilised nationalist and fascist forces, who came to power in violation of the constitution in a coup on February 22.

Now they are strengthening the right-wing extremist Ukrainian regime, to isolate Russia and expand the influence of the EU and NATO further eastwards.

As an extremely unscrupulous representative of the ruling elite, Schröder has clearly revealed what lurks behind the talk by politicians and the media about human rights and international law: a policy of war in complete violation of international law!



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