

Prime Minister Tusk calls for more NATO troops in Poland

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In an interview with the weekly *Die Zeit*, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk spoke out in favour of a common European energy, foreign and military policy under German leadership. In order to “stop Russian expansionism”, a “European energy union” was needed, he argued.

Calling Poland the “eastern flank of the EU”, Tusk also called for the stationing of more NATO troops in his country. “The physical presence of NATO in Poland is better than any guarantee on paper. That is also in the EU’s interest. Because here in the East we have a real external border of the Union”, Tusk said.

Last month the US stationed twelve F-16 fighter aircraft in Poland. When US vice president Joe Biden visited Poland in mid-March, he pledged an additional military presence. He also announced that part of the temporarily suspended American missile defence shield would be installed in Poland by 2018. First, a rocket launcher should be completed, which can intercept short-and medium-range missiles, and thus would be central to a military confrontation with Russia.

Nevertheless, Tusk criticized the fact the NATO presence in his country was growing too slowly. “We have already achieved certain results, but NATO could expand its military presence faster”, he said. Only a strong presence could guarantee the security of the Polish borders.

The same day, at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski called for the stationing of two mechanized infantry brigades in his country—about 10,000 soldiers. “We would then feel safer”, he said. Two weeks earlier, Sikorski had compared the Russian annexation of the Crimea with Hitler’s takeover of Austria, and declared: “Russia leaves us no choice.” Tusk added that Poland should “be prepared for black scenarios”.

On 26 March, Tusk and Polish President Bronisław

Komorowski attended a meeting of the Polish army leadership and promised that Poland will continue to upgrade its military capability. Last year a reform was begun, which, in the words of Komorowski, should make the army “a better, more powerful instrument”. In addition, there are defence ministry plans allocating €30 billion for the modernization of the armed forces over the next 10 years. One hundred used Leopard tanks were ordered from Germany alone.

From the beginning, the Polish government supported the aggressive policy of the US and Germany against the elected government of Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine, and played a central role in bringing a new government into office through a coup.

Sikorski was closely involved in the drafting of the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine, which Yanukovych ultimately refused to sign, triggering the protests on the Maidan. Ever since protesters gathered in November, Polish politicians were there. At first the government left the stage to opposition politicians such as the right-wing ex-prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński, while it was active in the background.

In November and December, Tusk spoke several times on the phone with Yanukovych and opposition leaders. On November 26, the German and Polish foreign ministries issued a joint statement in which they demanded that the Ukrainian government “move closer to Europe”. On December 19, Sikorski spoke out at a joint press conference with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD, Social Democratic Party) in favour of an aggressive course against Yanukovych, who simply did not want to find a solution.

Late January and early February, one meeting followed another. Within a few days Tusk met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU, Christian Democratic Union), the government heads of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the president of the Council

of Europe Herman Van Rompuy, and phoned several times with Yanukovych and opposition leaders Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Vitali Klitschko and the fascist Oleg Tyahnybok.

At the end of February, Sikorski finally travelled to Kiev together with Steinmeier and his French counterpart Laurent Fabius, in order to strengthen the opposition and put Yanukovych under pressure. The “compromise” they negotiated between Yanukovych and the opposition never came into being because on February 22 the elected president was chased out of the country by fascist thugs, and the deputies of his Party of the Regions were terrorized.

The new government, brought to power through a coup, was immediately accepted and supported by the attending foreign ministers. One of the first acts of the new government was the signing of the political section of the Association Agreement with the EU, and the adoption of massive social cuts.

Following its support for the coup, the Polish government went immediately over to banging the drums of war against Russia. After the regional parliament in Crimea had decided on March 2 to break away from Ukraine, Tusk said, “The only means to stop Russia and avoid tragic conflicts in this region are through massive pressure and persistence on the part of Europe, the United States and Canada.” On March 12, during a state visit to Warsaw by Merkel, Tusk called for the EU to become independent of Russian energy exports.

The aggressive policy towards Russia has been accompanied by intensive contacts with the new Ukrainian government, which includes the fascist party Svoboda, with its three ministers and other high-ranking officials. Several mutual state visits and countless phone calls were aimed at supporting the coup cabinet and ensuring it followed the desired course. On 3 April, Komorowski also received Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili in Warsaw, and called for the country to conclude an Association Agreement with the EU and NATO accession.

The Polish government is hoping that its aggressive foreign policy in the interests of German and US imperialism will bolster its regional strength. Seventy-five years after the German invasion of Poland, this vassal status leads the Polish government to call for German leadership in Europe and the stationing of German troops in the country.

In 2003, the Polish government had taken the side of aggressive imperialism and supported the US invasion of

Iraq. Today, the country has a government that wants to be particularly close to Germany and the US. Since 1992, Foreign Minister Sikorski has been married to the American journalist Anne Applebaum, who strongly advocates an anti-Russian policy.

For the US and Germany, Poland is of key strategic importance in expanding their influence over Ukraine. As early as 2012 in the book “Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power”, the Polish-American political scientist and former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote, “Without Ukraine, Russia will not be an empire. Some Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Ukraine, thanks to their size, location and economic and military potential, can have a real impact on the balance of power in Europe.”

The vassal service of the Polish government is the logical consequence of the restoration of capitalism 25 years ago. A small group of careerists and bureaucrats sold off the state-owned enterprises to the highest bidders, and placed the country on the drip-feed of foreign direct investment from which these layers live.

This had disastrous consequences for Polish workers. During the years of so-called “shock therapy” and thereafter, their social rights were declared null and void. The education and social systems were smashed up, millions of jobs destroyed and wages reduced to subsistence level or below.

At the beginning of this year, unemployment has risen again to 14 percent. For 2014, the government plans further privatizations worth 3.7 billion zloty (about €900 million).

In the interview with *Die Zeit*, Tusk also recommends this approach for Ukraine. “I do not know if there is an alternative to the reforms of the IMF”, the premier said. “When we introduced our reforms in Poland at the beginning of the nineties, most found them too radical, and it was very difficult indeed. Today, we are glad that we decided to do this, even if we thereby gave up many things and had to work hard.”



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