

Kiev regime spurns German foreign minister's call for "round table" talks with pro-Russian separatists

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German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier traveled to Ukraine Tuesday in an attempt to win acceptance from the Western-backed government in Kiev for so-called "round table" talks that would include representatives of insurgent separatists in the southeast of the country. The talks would be overseen by the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe, which has proposed them as part of a "road map" designed to contain the rebellion in the east and enable the Kiev regime to carry out presidential elections on May 25.

The elections are seen as crucial to lending the Kiev government, installed last February in a fascist-led putsch orchestrated by the United States and Germany, a cover of democratic legitimacy as it proceeds to integrate itself into the European Union while imposing severe austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund on Ukrainian workers.

The coup regime in Kiev continues to menace the inhabitants of the insurgent regions of Donetsk and Luhansk with army troops and a National Guard working closely with the neo-Nazi Right Sector militia, and the US and the European Union are preparing more draconian sanctions and military provocations against Russia. At the same time, the Western imperialist powers, particularly Germany, are increasingly concerned that the resistance in the east to the ultra-right Kiev government could get out of control and spark either civil war or a broader rebellion throughout the country.

These concerns are, in fact, shared by the right-wing regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which is based on oligarchs whose wealth is derived from the plundering of state property during the dissolution of

the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism. They have increased in the aftermath of the pro-independence referendums held Sunday by anti-Kiev authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk, mainly Russian-speaking industrial centers of Ukraine. The US, Germany, the European Union and their allies have all denounced the referendums as illegal Russian provocations.

The referendums passed overwhelmingly with a broad turnout of residents of the regions, having been held despite Putin's call for rebel leaders to postpone them and his subsequent endorsement of the May 25 presidential vote. On Monday, insurgent officials in the two regions declared independence from Ukraine and said they would not participate in the May 25 poll. Denis Pushilin, the main spokesman in Donetsk, urged Putin to annex the region, as Moscow had annexed Crimea following a similar referendum in March.

The Kremlin's response was to ignore the request for annexation and instead urge Kiev to enter into talks with the separatists in the east and withdraw its military forces from the region, endorsing the "road map" of the OSCE. The Putin government appears to be offering support for the May 25 presidential election in return for an agreement to grant the pro-Russian regions greater autonomy.

The concerns of both the imperialist powers and the Kremlin were indicated in an editorial published Tuesday by the *New York Times* entitled "What Mr. Putin Can't Control." The *Times*, which has ferociously promoted the anti-Russian, war-mongering propaganda of the Obama administration, concludes the editorial with the demand that Russia "get its minions in southeastern Ukraine in line" and the threat of

“sanctions that will cut Russia off for a long time from Western sources of technology, arms and finance.”

But it also states that “the gathering rumble of violence accompanying the [referendum] votes is serious and is driving the Ukrainian crisis in a direction that before long no one—not President Vladimir Putin of Russia, not authorities in Kiev, not the West—will be able to control.”

It adds, “The fact that the referendums were held despite Mr. Putin’s urging last week that they be postponed suggests that events are already developing a momentum of their own.”

Hence Steinmeier’s one-day visit, in which he held talks with acting Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, acting President Oleksandr Turchynov and Rinat Akhmetov, one of the country’s richest and most powerful oligarchs, whose operations are based in the rebellious southeast of the country. After meeting briefly with Yatsenyuk at Kiev’s main airport, Steinmeier told reporters that both Kiev and the rebels in the east had to engage in a “national dialog” to ensure elections that would usher in “an atmosphere that points Ukraine forward.”

Yatsenyuk, however, made clear in his remarks that his government rejected holding talks with the separatists, whom he called “terrorists.” Later on Tuesday, after meeting with European Union officials in Brussels, Yatsenyuk thanked the OSCE but said Ukraine had drawn up its own “road map” for ending the crisis.

A joint statement by Yatsenyuk and Turchynov issued Tuesday was more blunt. It declared: “We are ready to talk to all those who pursue legitimate political goals, who are prepared to advance them by legal means and who have no blood on their hands.”

Separately, Turchynov pledged that his government would continue its “anti-terrorist” operation to put down the rebellion in the east.

As with all statements from the puppet government in Kiev, the level of hypocrisy is grotesque. The two leaders are in power thanks to an extra-legal coup spearheaded by fascist thugs. Since coming to power, they have unleashed these forces, alongside tanks, helicopter gun ships and troops, to kill scores of anti-government protesters in the east. On May 2, their Right Sector shock troops torched the Trade Unions House in Odessa, killing at least 42 pro-Russian

protesters who had taken refuge there after their tent encampment outside the building had been set ablaze.

Two developments Tuesday underscored the explosive situation in the regions that voted to secede from Ukraine. Unknown assailants attempted to assassinate Valery Bolotov, a separatist leader in Luhansk. They fired on his car, sending him to the hospital with wounds that were, however, not life-threatening.

Seven Ukrainian soldiers were killed and eight wounded in a rebel ambush between Kramatorsk and Slavyansk. Separatists said they destroyed two Ukrainian armored vehicles.



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