

Polish Prime Minister Tusk to become new EU Council president

Christoph Dreier
4 September 2014

Last Saturday, representatives of European Union (EU) governments agreed to appoint Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk as the new EU Council president. The appointment of the nationalist, neo-liberal politician confirms the EU's transformation into an aggressive military alliance.

As Council president, Tusk will be responsible for organising EU summits to determine EU policy and adopt key decisions. He will also lead the meetings of euro group heads of government, although Poland is not part of the currency union.

Last week, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President François Hollande and British Prime Minister David Cameron all expressed their support for the appointment of Tusk, who does not speak French and is not fluent in English.

Tusk's succession to the relatively restrained Herman van Rompuy of Belgium is a clear political signal. More than any other politician in the EU, Tusk has intervened in recent months in favor of an aggressive course towards Russia and a strengthening of NATO. Since taking over as head of the Polish government in 2007, he has implemented brutal austerity measures against the Polish working class, laying down a benchmark for the whole of the continent.

The German press could not contain its enthusiasm. Tusk would bring the "experience of the anti-communist and anti-Soviet resistance to Brussels," the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* proclaimed on Monday. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* declared that Tusk had a "fine ear for tank columns." Due to his experience in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s, Tusk would pursue a firm line against Russia in Ukraine, the conservative newspaper stated.

Tusk left no doubt as to the anti-Russian character of his presidency. Speaking Monday at a commemoration

of the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, he said, "We Europeans must learn a lesson from the tragic Polish September and the years of the Second World War. There can be no naive optimism."

He continued, "We Poles therefore have the right to say loudly that no one has the right to block our initiatives, whose goal is a more effectively acting NATO."

This was not a time for fine words, Tusk added. "If we look today at the tragedy in Ukraine, at the war in the east of our continent, then we know that we cannot allow September 1939 to be repeated. There is still time now to stop those who use violence as part of their policy arsenal."

Tusk delivered these threats on the anniversary of the Nazi invasion of Poland, which was the opening shot of Hitler's war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. Millions of Poles and some 27 million Soviet soldiers and citizens died in the Nazi invasion. Seventy five years later, Germany is organising another confrontation with Russia in alliance with its NATO partners, and the Polish prime minister is giving his enthusiastic support.

Tusk played a significant role in initiating the confrontation with Russia in recent months. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to sign an association agreement with the EU at the end of last year led to the Maidan protests. The Polish government was central to the drafting of the agreement.

The Maidan protests were openly supported by numerous Polish politicians. Tusk kept in constant telephone contact with opposition leaders. In February, he was involved in the negotiations that led to the downfall of Yanukovich and his replacement by a right-wing government in which the fascists of Svoboda play a central role.

Tusk has supported the regime in Kiev ever since, urging a military and economic confrontation with Russia. At the beginning of March, he called for “major pressure and firmness on the part of Europe” in order to stop Russia.

In April, his government called for the stationing of 10,000 additional NATO troops in Poland and the establishment of an energy union to secure gas supplies for EU member states. The aim of this initiative was to reduce dependence on Russian gas supplies.

Tusk’s anti-Russian position is just as deeply rooted as his neo-liberal orientation. He was part of the right-wing faction of the anti-communist opposition in Stalinist Poland from a young age. He completed his history studies in 1980 with a work on Polish nationalist dictator Jozef Piłsudski.

At the time of the pro-capitalist dissolution of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, Tusk was one of the most aggressive advocates of “shock therapy,” through which the past social gains of Polish workers were rapidly destroyed and state ownership of industry was dismantled. In an interview with the newspaper *Trybuna* in 1992, in the face of mass protests by workers against social attacks, he called for the violent suppression of the protests, if necessary by the military.

Tusk represents a small layer of social climbers that enriched itself during the transition from Stalinism to free market economics from the sell-off and theft of state property and a brutal level of exploitation of the working class. In 1989, he founded the Liberal Democratic Congress, which supported the neo-liberal government of Hanna Suchocka in 1992. After merging with other right-wing parties to form the Freedom Union (UW), Tusk joined the government of Jerzy Bucek.

Tusk’s declared role models include reactionary, neo-liberal politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Since taking over the post of prime minister in 2007 with his newly founded Citizens Platform (PO), he has carried out savage attacks on workers across the country. He recently raised the retirement age, previously 60 for women and 65 for men, to 67 across the board, and ended early retirement for several particularly onerous occupations.

Tusk’s appointment underscores the reactionary nature of the Brussels bureaucracy. Since the 2008

financial crisis, the EU apparatus has been used ever more openly to pursue a foreign policy of militarism and a domestic policy of austerity. Tusk will be a close NATO ally in the confrontational course towards Russia.

The German government is taking the lead against Russia as it did in carrying out social attacks in recent years. The EU bureaucracy serves Berlin’s aim of dominating Eastern Europe in order to undermine Russia and gain control of its raw materials.

Tusk has repeatedly offered Poland’s services as a German vassal. The new EU Council president speaks fluent German and is a close confidante of Chancellor Angela Merkel. Through Tusk, the criminal social layers that have dominated Poland since the transition to capitalism hope to secure a position for Poland as a regional power by offering their services to German and American imperialism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact