

Visiting Berlin, Poroshenko steps up drive against Russia

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Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko used his visit to Berlin on Monday to intensify the confrontation with Russia.

Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union/CDU) used a joint press conference in Berlin to endorse Poroshenko, declaring she had “great respect” for “all of the efforts” of his government.

Merkel also repeated the mantra that Russia has “placed the peaceful order of Europe in question with its illegal annexation of Crimea.” She said she wanted “to make it clear once again that we will not forget that.” It is not time to “ease off as long as the full sovereignty of Ukraine has not yet been reestablished.” That includes “Crimea as well, naturally, but above all the regions around Luhansk and Donetsk,” said the chancellor.

But what are the “efforts” of the Ukrainian president, to which Merkel pays such great respect? Before Poroshenko met Merkel and was greeted with military honors by President Joachim Gauck, he agitated against Russia in the *Bild* newspaper and demanded more German support for his aggressive war in eastern Ukraine.

Regardless of the “horror scenarios” of a “third world war,” said the tabloid newspaper, which is notorious for its smear campaigns, we must “take off our rose colored glasses and recognize that the security structure that has guaranteed peace in Europe for 70 years does not work anymore.” A war is being fought in Ukraine “in which there are 50,000 soldiers on both sides. A war in which the greatest military force in Europe is confronted with Russia.” It is “a global war, in which Russia no longer recognizes any red line.”

Although Poroshenko admitted in the same interview that the conflict could turn into a nuclear third world war, he insisted that the imperialist powers must

militarily encircle Russia and further isolate it economically and politically. He demanded a boycott of the 2018 World Cup, due to take place in Russia, as well as weapons shipments into Ukraine and heightened sanctions against Russia.

“The consensus of the US and Europe” is “decisive for the solution of the conflict,” he said. With reference to sending weapons to the Ukrainian army, he said, “not only is the US helping us. Eleven partner countries are supporting us with military and technical supplies. We are getting military technical support and defensive weapons. For example, we are already getting protective vests from Germany.” But Kiev needs more “in order to be able to support itself,” he said, including “radar reconnaissance, drones, and radio and night vision devices.”

The chancellor has not pledged anything of the sort, at least officially. She rejected a boycott of the world cup and asserted that new sanctions against Russia could only be imposed “if necessary” and are “not an end in themselves.”

“We do not want them. If there is a new situation, we will have to decide again,” said the chancellor.

Like Merkel, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democratic Party/SPD) also called for the implementation of the Minsk agreement. Even before Poroshenko’s arrival, he said, “we must strive with all our might to stabilize our achievements and begin to carry out the political process outlined in Minsk.”

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has provided Ukraine with “breathing space” in the form of credit in excess of \$5 billion, earmarked for “reforms” and the “economic and social stabilization of the country.”

What is behind Berlin’s words of warning to Poroshenko? In the past few weeks, tensions have

increased between Germany and the US, which, for its part, is working closely with the Ukrainian government. While Washington is pursuing the goal of destabilizing and subjugating Russia militarily, Berlin wants to exploit Eastern Europe and Russia economically.

A few days ago, an article by Jochen Bittner appeared in *Die Zeit* under the title “Factory buildings instead of battlefields,” summing up the perspective of German imperialism. Bittner asks, “If the conflict with Russia will not really be decided on the battlefields of Donbass, but in the factory buildings and corporate offices of Kiev and Lvov, doesn’t Ukraine have much better long-term prospects of winning the conflict?”

His plan: the exploitation of the Ukrainian workers and raw materials by German industry. “Ukraine has potential, from handiwork to raw materials,” according to Bittner.

“A year ago, a number of corporations from the EU were planning to expand into Ukraine,” including “a number of auto suppliers, which have settled in the west near the Polish border. Wage costs of about two euros an hour make Ukraine an attractive location for operations that cannot be carried out by machinery alone, such as production cable harnesses, connector systems, or heated seats,” he said.

The German government is participating in the NATO militarization in Eastern Europe, which it sees as a chance to arm Germany and prepare for the use of military power to defend German interests in the future. At the moment, however, Germany fears an uncontrolled escalation of the conflict between NATO and Russia, for which the German army is not yet prepared and which could devastate Europe.

Last week, Steinmeier pleaded in the US for a continuation of “political and economic pressure” on Russia, but warned against sending weapons to Ukraine, since they could “catapult” the conflict “into the next phase.” At least some sections of the ruling elite in the US seem to be planning exactly this, risking a nuclear war in order to subjugate Russia.

On Monday, it became known that the US wants to send a tank convoy through eastern NATO member states. The 1800-kilometer trip would be a component of NATO’s “Atlantic Resolve” exercise, explained a US Army spokesperson in Wiesbaden. NATO has already begun naval maneuvers in the Black Sea under the leadership of the US and sent 3,000 heavily armed

soldiers to the Baltic states.

In reaction, Russia placed the North Sea fleet and paratrooper units on the alert. “New challenges and dangers for military security demand that the army further expand its military capabilities,” said Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, according to a report by the news agency RIA.

All together, 38,000 soldiers, more than 40 ships, approximately 15 submarines, and 110 planes have been mobilized within the framework of extensive military maneuvers.



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