

Poland rearms against Russia

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Under new President Andrzej Duda, the Polish government is aggressively rearming against Russia. The strengthening of the military and state apparatus is aimed at consolidating Poland's position as a regional power in Eastern Europe, and is at the same time directed against the Polish working class.

President Duda, from the nationalist Law and Justice Party (PiS), replaced Bronislaw Komorowski in May. In an interview with the *Financial Times*, Duda, who is even more firmly oriented towards an alliance with US imperialism than his predecessor, called for permanent NATO bases in Eastern Europe, and especially in Poland.

Duda stated in the interview that NATO was using Poland as a “buffer zone”, and this could not be allowed to continue. “We want to be the real eastern flank of the alliance”, he said. Looking at the distribution of military bases today, Germany forms the eastern border of the military alliance, he claimed. But if Poland and other Central European countries formed the true flank of NATO, it seemed to him obvious that “as a logical conclusion, bases are established in these countries”.

The permanent stationing of NATO troops directly on the Russian border would be equivalent to an open military provocation against Moscow.

Duda was sending an unmistakable message with the interview, the first of his period in office with an international newspaper: Poland will intensify its confrontational approach to Russia and push more strongly for Polish demands within NATO.

Krzysztof Szczerski, Duda's representative for foreign affairs, demanded in addition that “the joint stance of NATO should more strongly reflect Poland's standpoint.”

In Poland, the president enjoys considerable power over foreign policy. Duda is head of military and foreign policy and can propose legislation and block it

with a veto. In the interview with the *Financial Times*, Duda announced he would make more use of these rights than his predecessor and intervene in the government's foreign policy. This would not amount to “a revolution, but a corrective”, Duda said.

Shortly after the interview, the office of the Polish president announced that Duda would make his first foreign state visit to Estonia on August 23, the anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin pact. According to his office, Duda intends to prove his “solidarity” with the Baltic states, which, along with Poland, are the most aggressive advocates of confrontation with Russia. According to a source in the presidential office cited by Reuters, Duda intends to work on building a united front in the region. The visit to Estonia is to serve as the starting point for this.

Duda will meet with German President Joachim Gauck and Chancellor Angela Merkel on August 28. Meetings with UN representatives and a state visit to the US are also planned.

On November 3 and 4, a NATO pre-conference is planned in Bucharest, led jointly by the Romanian and Polish governments. Government representatives from EU member states from Eastern Europe—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania—will participate. Media observers expect that a joint position will be discussed at the pre-conference for the main NATO conference scheduled next year in Poland. Duda has already declared that he intends to push for the permanent stationing of troops and military bases in Eastern Europe at the conference.

Since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, Poland has been pursuing a course of confrontation towards Russia. The Polish government played an important role in the preparation of the coup in Kiev in February 2014, and trained extreme right-wing forces now playing a key role in the civil war. Poland is now

deliberately using the conflict between Russia and the EU and US to strengthen its military and present itself as a regional power.

Last year, Poland increased its military spending by 18 percent in comparison to the previous year, more than any other European country. In February, the government then announced it would increase military spending to the level of 2 percent of GDP demanded by NATO. In total, €33.6 billion is to be invested in the military. (See: “Poland increases military spending”)

Shortly after being elected, Duda spoke out in favour of building a broad military alliance against Russia, not only including NATO members. “I am considering founding a bloc of partners”, he said, “stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Adriatic.”

Discussions are ongoing about the founding of a joint military brigade between Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, named LITPOLUKRBRIG, which, according to some analysts, could become the prototype for a joint military unit. In addition, Poland plans to form a Baltic Sea and Black Sea association, allowing countries that are not yet NATO members, like Ukraine and Moldova, to take part.

Poland’s attempt, in collaboration with the Western imperialist powers, to establish an anti-Russian alliance with the Baltic states and several other post-Soviet states, has a long and dark history. It draws on the “Intermarium”, a network of nationalist forces in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet region lead by Poland.

The predecessor organisation of Intermarium, the Prometheus League, was founded under the right-wing dictator Józef Piłsudski in the 1920s. Within its framework, the Polish government established a network of nationalists in Ukraine, the Baltic states, Georgia and Azerbaijan with the aim of overthrowing the Soviet state and installing right-wing nationalist governments.

After the attack of Nazi Germany on Poland, this network was taken over by the National Socialists and integrated into the war of extermination against the Soviet Union. After the war, most of the network’s members—almost all Nazi collaborators—were smuggled by Western intelligence agencies and the Catholic Church to the US, Canada and Britain. These forces acted under the code name Intermarium and played an important role in the covert war of the US against the

Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The revival of these types of military alliances is also being openly discussed in US government circles and think tanks. George Friedman, the head of Stratfor, which is closely aligned with the CIA, wrote as early as March 2014 that the US should not send any ground troops to Ukraine and instead rely on a military alliance like Intermarium. “Although what is emerging now is not Intermarium, it is something similar,” he wrote.

Polish militarism is not only directed abroad, but above all against its own working class. The hysterical propaganda against Russia, which is mobilising the most extreme right-wing forces in Poland, is not least an attempt on the part of the Polish government to divert attention away from growing social tensions domestically, where youth unemployment is 24 percent and large sections of the population live in extreme poverty.

Polish Defence Minister Tomasz Siemoniak recently encouraged the Polish population to volunteer for military training, “to defend the fatherland” in the face of the “threat” from Russia. The minister also announced in an interview with Britain’s Sky News that in the event of war, he would integrate paramilitary units into the regular army.

The regime in Kiev is following a similar approach. In the civil war, the Ukrainian army, which is having major problems with recruitment, is working closely with ultra-right-wing bands that hail Nazi collaborators and proceed with extreme brutality against the separatists in the east of the country, and any resistance from working people. Polish paramilitary associations, which are dominated by the political far right, have seen considerable growth since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis.



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