

German foreign minister outlines European strategy

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Anyone seeking clarification about the reactionary program behind the so-called “election campaign” of Social Democratic Party chancellor candidate Martin Schulz and a possible “red-red-green” (SPD-Left Party-Green Party) federal government in Germany should read Sigmar Gabriel's contribution on the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in the *Rheinische Post*.

Under the title “Fighting for a Stronger Europe,” the Social Democratic foreign minister and former SPD chief pleads for the rearmament of the continent both at home and abroad, for a strengthening of “Fortress Europe” and a continuation of austerity policies.

In the area of foreign and security policy, it is time “to say goodbye to the idea that we are not responsible for our own security in Europe. The sentence is correct: Europe finally has to grow up,” Gabriel writes. The partnership with the US and NATO are “cornerstones of the transatlantic community,” he says, but the European Union must be “able to cope with crises and conflicts in its own neighbourhood. The first steps have been taken, others have to follow.”

Gabriel is well aware that a more independent and aggressive European military policy under German leadership also requires the internal militarization of the continent. Europe needs to “improve its internal security,” he says. In order to justify the setting up of a pan-European police force he cynically raises the alleged “struggle against terrorism”: “Here, we can and must be better, through better cooperation and more exchange. The people of Europe should not be afraid. Whether it is in Brussels, Paris, Berlin or elsewhere—freedom and security go hand in hand.”

The fact that Gabriel's priority has nothing really to do with “freedom” or “security” is underlined by his plea for an expansion of Fortress Europe. He seeks a “protection of Europe's external borders, which really lives up to the name.” Within Europe, “borders have lost much of their

importance,” and that is “a great achievement. But strong external borders are also a great achievement.” The foreign minister then made clear against whom the strong borders are directed: “We see, in the midst of the crises in our neighbourhood and the refugee flows, how important an effective protection of our borders is.”

Gabriel would be a poor Social Democrat if he did not combine the brutal repulsion of desperate people fleeing war zones in the Middle East and North Africa and the death by drowning of thousands in the Mediterranean, with vicious attacks on the European working class. All EU members must be prepared to “undertake the necessary reforms to maintain their competitiveness,” he wrote.

Gabriel justified his call for “European unity” as follows: “In this crisis-stricken world, where so many certainties have been lost, European states can only successfully defend their interests and values when they speak with one voice. No country in Europe, even Germany, can do it alone. Together we are so much stronger than the sum of our individual states. To this end we need to close ranks.”

To put it in a nutshell: only when Germany holds the continent together as “hegemon” and “taskmaster” (Herfried Münkler) can it play a role in world politics.

Gabriel is thereby pursuing Germany's traditional world-power strategy, which had already been adopted in the Foreign Ministry under his predecessor Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD). Germany's imperial empire (Kaiserreich) and the Third Reich had also tried to unite Europe under German hegemony in order to further its geopolitical interests.

At the start of the First World War, Walter Rathenau, the head of the German office for war supplies, had declared: “The ultimate leadership of Europe is indispensable because an emerging central power like Germany will always suffer from the jealousy of its

neighbours to the extent they lack the strength to incorporate these neighbours organically...It is the German task to manage and strengthen the old European body.”

And Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop wrote in the guidelines for a “Europe Committee” established in April 1943: “It is already clear today that the future of Europe can only survive based on the full implementation of the pre-eminence of the Great German Reich. The safeguarding of this pre-eminence must, therefore, be seen as the core of the future re-organization.”

Shortly afterwards Joseph Goebbels stated in his diary: “It must remain the goal of our struggle to create a united Europe. But Europe can only undergo clear organization under the Germans. There is practically no other leadership.”

In order to once again bring the continent under German domination, the ruling class is preparing to sweep aside all of the democratic limitations it was forced to accept after two lost world wars, albeit through clenched teeth. According to a report by the *Rheinische Post*, Gabriel pleaded at a defence policy conference of the SPD parliamentary group for a weakening of parliament’s constitutional right to decide on the Bundeswehr’s foreign operations. For example, the EU’s participation in military deployment should not be made dependent on the Bundestag “because it may be just before an election.” This is an issue that “will challenge the politics of our country,” the foreign minister added.

A document from the German Society for Foreign Affairs (DGAP), notably titled “Europe—where are your Legions?” calls for a “Europe Division” of 20,000 soldiers set up by Germany, as the starting point for a European army controlled from Berlin. After all, “in the sphere of defence the main thing is the actual available military capabilities. Mere words about strength and responsibility impress neither Moscow nor Washington.”



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