

German politicians and media agitate against Poland

By Clara Weiss
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Tensions between Germany and Poland have escalated rapidly since the victory of the right-wing nationalist PiS (Law and Justice) party in the Polish federal election last October.

By the end of last year German newspapers were calling for a halt to EU funds to Poland and to not allow the Polish government “to do what it wants” (*Die Welt*). Now leading German politicians and journalists are publicly advocating placing Poland under EU supervision or expelling the country from the EU entirely.

On Monday Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski met with the German Ambassador to Poland, Rolf Nikel. At the meeting Nikel was asked to account for the “anti-Polish statements of German politicians.”

The right-wing PiS government in Poland has carried out a virtual putsch in the space of a few months following its election victory. The party led by Jarosław Kaczyński aims to establish an authoritarian regime in Poland and enforce massive attacks on the working class, together with an aggressive military policy against Russia. Even more than the previous government led by the Civic Platform (PO) and the Polish People’s Party PSL, the (PiS) bases itself on a close alliance with the US, combining its nationalist policies with anti-German and anti-European rhetoric.

Representatives of the EU and especially Germany have reacted very tersely to the new media law introduced by the PiS, which brings public television and radio under its control. In an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, European Commissioner for Media and Digital Affairs Günther Oettinger (CDU) called for “the enactment of the rule of law and mechanisms to place Warsaw under supervision.”

Specifically, this would mean that a commission appointed by the EU would make “proposals to Warsaw for the amendment of current national legislation. If the Polish government fails to agree to these proposals,

thereby leading to a “serious and persistent breach” of the guidelines enshrined in the Treaty on European Union Policy, then Brussels could strip Poland of its voting rights in ministerial councils and EU summits—an historic precedent for the EU. *Spiegel Online* commented that such a scenario amounts to what “diplomats in Brussels call a nuclear bomb.”

Jakob Augstein, the editor-in-chief and publisher of the weekly newspaper *Freitag* went even further. In his regular column in *Spiegel Online*, Augstein argued for the exclusion of Poland from the EU. Taking a lead from Samuel Huntington’s book “Clash of Civilizations” Augstein espouses ideas associated with the extreme right, writing that “a cultural war” between east and west was in progress.

“The western values of liberalism, tolerance, equality confront the eastern lack of values—racism, ignorance, bigotry,” Augstein writes. It is therefore appropriate to consider, he continues, “with which neighbours we want to build a united Europe. The Poles are not likely to be included.”

Augstein’s comments reek of aggression and hypocrisy. The claim that the “West” has the monopoly on such values as “liberalism,” “tolerance” and “equality” is a brazen lie. American, German, French and British imperialism have brought about a disaster of historical proportions in North Africa and the Middle East. In the past 25 years the countries of Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and now Syria have been bombed, killing millions, and forcing millions of survivors to flee abroad.

In the southern member states of the EU, the German government has played a central role in enforcing draconian austerity diktats against the population and in violation of all democratic norms. In Ukraine, Germany and the US have collaborated with fascist forces to instigate a right-wing coup. The German government also maintains friendly relations and cooperation with

authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which brutally suppress the minorities in their own countries.

Representatives of German imperialism and its servants in the media have absolutely no right to lecture any country about “democracy” and “tolerance.”

Poland was one of the greatest victims of German imperialism during World War II. Under Nazi occupation Poland became the main centre for the Nazi mass murder of European Jews. Of the original 3.3 million Polish Jews around 3 million were murdered. An additional 1.5 million Jews from all over Europe were transported to and gassed in extermination camps in Poland. Several million Poles, including hundreds of thousands of children were deported to the Reich and were forced to work there. An estimated 8 million died in Poland—victims of the Nazi war of aggression, forced labor, famine and the Holocaust.

Given the propaganda about Western “values” to be taught to the rest of the world, it is appropriate to recall that the German occupation of Eastern Europe was carried out in the First and Second World War with the argument that Germany was conducting a “civilizing mission” in the East.

The current shift to the right in Poland and other Eastern European countries is not unrelated to the policies of Germany and the EU. The ruling class in Germany enthusiastically support the restoration of capitalism in Poland and has profited considerably from it. After joining the EU in 2004 Poland was transformed into an extended work-bank of German industry while Polish immigrants and temporary workers in Germany remain amongst the most exploited layer of workers.

Jarosław Kaczyński and his party are a product of this development. Like much of the current PiS government, he is one of the group of former activists of the Solidarity movement that threw themselves into the arms of imperialism and made capitalist restoration the starting point for their personal enrichment and political career. Together with his late twin brother Lech, Jarosław Kaczyński assumed political posts under the presidency of Lech Wałęsa, the leader of Solidarity.

In both interior and foreign policy, Kaczyński has based himself on the political legacy of Józef Piłsudski, who established an authoritarian regime in the interwar period in Poland to avert the threat of socialist revolution.

In the realm of foreign policy, Kaczyński and his ally President Andrzej Duda, are seeking to revive the “Intermarium” project of Piłsudski. The “Intermarium”

was an alliance of far-right and nationalist forces in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, whose primary objective was the forcible dissolution of the Soviet Union into individual nation states. After the German invasion of Poland, the Nazis took over large parts of the Intermarium network and integrated it into their war offensive against the Soviet Union.

In his inaugural speech in August 2015, Duda pointed to the foreign policy objectives of the PiS. He spoke in favour of the “renaissance” of a confederation of states extending from “Central and Eastern Europe from the Baltic Sea down to the Adriatic Sea” and called for the military reinforcement of NATO in Poland and throughout Eastern Europe.

The PiS is pursuing this strategy in close cooperation with the United States. At a meeting with new Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski in December 2015 US Secretary of State John Kerry reaffirmed the Obama Administration’s support for the expansion of NATO’s missile defense system in Poland. Berlin has repeatedly opposed such a step.

Representatives of the American elite have repeatedly campaigned for a revival of the Intermarium in recent years. In an aggressive speech at the European Forum for New Ideas (EFNI) in 2012 George Friedman, the head of the private intelligence service Stratfor, called upon Poland to take up a “leading role in Europe.” As “archaic” it may sound, a “revival of Intermarium” against Russia and Germany in alliance with the US, was in the national interest of Poland, Friedman explained.

These geopolitical conflicts are the real background to the hysteria and hostility on the part of German politicians and the media against the new Polish government. The German elite understands very well that Kaczyński’s foreign policy of an “Intermarium,” supported by US imperialism would challenge German leadership in Europe. A commentary in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* complained recently about the Polish “vision” of an “Intermarium,” a union of states “from the Baltic to the Black Sea as a counterweight to Russia—and Germany, the new hegemon in Europe.”

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