Polish government prepares legal action against EU council president Donald Tusk

By Clara Weiss
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The Polish government, headed by the Law and Justice (PiS) party, is preparing to mount a legal action against the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk. Tusk is a member of the opposition Civic Platform (PO), and was Polish prime minister from 2007 to 2014. With its campaign against Tusk, the PiS is trying to eliminate an important ally of the German government in the EU, weaken the opposition in Poland and foment anti-Russian sentiment.

The head of the PiS, Jaroslaw Kaczyński, has repeatedly declared that the government will not support a second Tusk presidency of the Council. He also threatened to prosecute Tusk. According to the Polish media Tusk is threatened with being charged with “diplomatic treason”, i.e. activities against the interests of Poland in cooperation with a foreign state. The charge involves a possible sentence of 10 years’ imprisonment. The Polish newspaper wSieci wrote that it is “very likely” that such a prosecution will go ahead.

The allegations concern Tusk’s relations with the Kremlin and, in particular, his political reaction to the aircraft crash in Smolensk in 2010, which resulted in the death of a large part of the Polish government, as well as representatives of the military and the Sejm (Polish parliament). Among the victims of the Smolensk crash was the Polish president at that time, Lech Kaczyński, the twin brother of the current PiS head.

The PiS maintains that the crash was not an accident, but rather an attack by Russia on the Polish government. It accuses the government under Tusk of concealing the “real” causes of the crash in conspiracy with the Kremlin.

Since taking power last autumn, the PiS government has stepped up its propaganda campaign significantly. In September, a government commission began to investigate the disaster. The chairman of the commission is Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz, one of the most right-wing members of the Polish cabinet and a vehement supporter of the massive NATO military offensive against Russia.

In recent years, Macierewicz has repeatedly put forward various conspiracy theories to explain the incident in Smolensk. A movie showing widely in Poland at the moment supports the version of the crash propagated by the PiS. The film has been enthusiastically promoted by leading PiS politicians.

In fact, Tusk is no friend of the Kremlin. He and his party, PO, are among the fiercest warmongers in the EU. Following an EU summit on relations with Russia in October, Tusk said: “It is clear that Russia’s strategy is to weaken the EU.” He described the economic sanctions levied against Russia due to the Ukraine crisis as a “defensive” measure.

The Tusk government helped organize the coup in Ukraine in 2014, trained right-wing, paramilitary Ukrainian militias and launched the massive military campaign against Russia, which the PiS government has continued.

When the PiS describes this attitude as too soft, it makes clear the extent to which the current government is pressing for war with Russia. The threats against Tusk are aimed not least at intimidating genuine opponents of such a war.

The PiS is also attacking Tusk because he represents a wing of the Polish bourgeoisie that advocates close cooperation between Poland and Germany, within the framework of the EU. According to media reports, Tusk is in daily telephone contact with his successor as head of the PO, Ewa Kopacz. Despite his function in the EU, he remains the de facto leader of the party.

As president of the European Council, which consists
of the heads of state and government of all member
countries and is the real power center of the EU, Tusk
works closely with Berlin. He has played an important
role in keeping growing opposition on the part of the
so-called Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, Czech
Republic, Slovakia) under the control of Germany.
Apart from the PiS government, the governments of the
Visegrad countries largely support Tusk’s political
course.

The American web site Politico quoted an adviser to
the German Social Democratic Party who said: “You
can trust him, he is reliable, he can keep secrets to
himself. Everyone knows that [German chancellor
Angela] Merkel desperately needs Tusk to keep the
Eastern European countries quiet and under control.
She will never let him fall. She would rather sacrifice
the presidency of the EU parliament, currently held by
the German Martin Schulz, (SPD), in order to keep
Tusk.”

Tusk works closely with Merkel and her government
on many issues and advocates, along with Berlin and
Paris, a “hard Brexit” for Britain.

Representatives of PiS had attacked Tusk after the
Brexit referendum, which came as a major shock for
the Polish bourgeoisie. Kaczy?ski accused Tusk of
being “directly responsible” for the “no” vote because
he had imposed harsh conditions on Great Britain in
negotiations. Kaczy?ski said Tusk should “disappear”
from the political stage.

The PiS government is also opposed to the plans for a
European military union, an initiative mainly driven by
Berlin and Paris, and is trying to establish close ties
with the British government led by Theresa May. She
hopes to use the Brexit to transform the EU from a
political into a purely economic alliance. So far,
however, negotiations between Poland and the UK
have proceeded slowly.

The attacks on Tusk are not least of all aimed at
eliminating an important ally of Berlin in the EU,
thereby weakening the position of Germany, and
hindering Berlin’s plans for a military union.

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