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## Germany and EU support US-engineered coup in Venezuela

The governments of Germany, France, Spain, Great Britain and the Netherlands, as well as European Union Foreign Affairs Commissioner Federica Mogherini, gave the president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, an ultimatum on Saturday: either he calls “free, transparent and democratic elections” within eight days, or Juan Guaidó, who appointed himself head of state last week with Washington’s backing, will be recognized as the new president.

Maduro rejected this demand at once, while Guaidó welcomed the “tough” EU response. It was “very positive, very productive for Venezuela,” he said. The line of “pressure” taken by Europe was correct, he told his followers in Caracas, and appealed again to the military to abandon Maduro and back him.

The threat against Maduro exposes the lie that Berlin and Brussels, unlike Washington, pursue a foreign policy committed to multilateralism, democracy and peace. Not only the governing Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, but also the Greens and the Left Party support the return of Germany to great power politics and militarism.

It is the second time in five years that Berlin and Brussels have supported a right-wing coup that bears the “Made in the USA” trademark. In 2014, they actively participated in the overthrow of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who was replaced by the pro-Western oligarch Petro Poroshenko.

The then-foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who is now federal president, travelled personally to Kiev to negotiate the transfer of power and met with Oleh Tyahnybok, the leader of the far-right Svoboda party, which stands in the tradition of Nazi

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collaborators from the Second World War. Deputy US Secretary of State Victoria Nuland bragged that Washington had spent \$5 billion to finance the regime-change operation in Kiev. The German media talked about a “democratic revolution” even when it became clear that the armed militia leading the Maidan protests in Kiev was recruited from neo-Nazis.

The consequences of this coup were devastating. As was foreseeable, the seizure of power by an ultranationalist regime in Kiev triggered a violent reaction among Russian-speaking inhabitants concentrated in eastern Ukraine, estimated at between 30 to 50 percent of the population. Russia was unwilling to accept the establishment of a pro-NATO regime on its immediate border and the loss of its naval base in Crimea, and supported anti-Kiev forces. For NATO, the coup served as an excuse to station troops in Poland and the Baltic states. The danger of Europe becoming a nuclear battlefield in a Third World War was immensely heightened.

Support for the coup in Caracas is no less reactionary and its consequences will be no less catastrophic. The talk from Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Emmanuel Macron of the Venezuelan people being allowed to “decide freely about their future” is a transparent fraud.

Juan Guaidó is a puppet of the US, and neither Washington nor Guaidó bother to hide it. Even the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* admits this fact in a rare display of openness.

“The precipitous events in the Venezuelan capital did not surprise foreign policy experts in Washington,” it reported on Monday. Vice-President Mike Pence publicly supported the protests against Maduro in a video message. Pence had called Guaidó the night before he proclaimed himself president and promised US support—which the Trump administration, with the full backing of the Democrats, proceeded to declare. Washington has imposed sanctions on the Maduro regime and the state-owned oil company and is threatening military intervention.

For weeks, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote, citing the *Wall Street Journal*, “there have been confidential talks with the opposition in Caracas, with allies in the region and with foreign policy leaders in Congress.” The idea of recognizing Guaidó as Venezuelan president was pushed with particular force by Donald Trump’s national security adviser John Bolton, who is among the fiercest anti-Iran warmongers in the foreign policy establishment.

The *Associated Press* also reported that the anti-Maduro coalition had been created in weeks of covert talks. Guaidó had secretly travelled to Washington and had visited the ultra-right Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro. There were many long meetings “with encrypted text messages.” When the decision for the coup was taken, the plotters chose Guaidó to head it up. “More moderate representatives were left in the dark.”

The Venezuelan population can expect neither freedom nor democracy from such a far-right conspirator. Guaidó stands in the tradition of those Latin American elites that have repeatedly defended their wealth and power with the help of US-backed dictatorships and have not shied away from massacring tens of thousands.

It is significant that the Trump administration has tasked Elliott Abrams with overseeing the “transition to democracy” in Venezuela. Abrams was one of the most prominent supporters of the Central American death squads in the 1980s, responsible for devastating entire countries. In the course of the 1980s Iran-Contra scandal, which concerned the secret financing by the White House of death squads in Nicaragua, Abrams was convicted of perjury.

Berlin and Brussels are backing the Venezuelan coup because they are pursuing their own imperialist interests in Latin America, no less criminally and ruthlessly than Washington. Again, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* is remarkably open. Under the headline, “Venezuela’s wealth,” it writes, “Of course, it’s about oil in Venezuela. The country has the largest proven reserves in the world. China, Russia, the United States and the entire oil industry are eagerly looking to Venezuela.”

The article then seeks to relativize this statement, citing the country’s catastrophic economic and social situation, which had triggered mass protests against Maduro. In Guaidó, the Venezuelans had found “a new hope,” the paper said.

In reality, Guaidó is the “new hope”—as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* puts it—of “the entire oil industry,” including the European, which wants to exploit the riches of the country unhindered. Germany and the EU are concerned about their own sales markets, their investments and their raw material sources in Latin America, with its 500 million inhabitants. Since the formulation of the Monroe Doctrine 200 years ago, Washington has considered Latin America as its “backyard,” but more recently Russia and especially China have emerged as major competitors.

The Venezuelan coup is part of a global offensive against the working class, in which the ruling class is with increasing openness using authoritarian and dictatorial means to defend its wealth. It is also part of a global struggle between the major powers for markets,

resources and strategic interests, which will inevitably lead to a world war if the working class does not stop the warmongers in time.