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German government backs attempted right-wing coup in Venezuela

Germany's grand coalition government, led by the Social Democratic Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who is currently touring Latin America, is playing a central role in the imperialist offensive against Venezuela. In a joint press release with the far-right Brazilian government, Germany's Foreign Ministry gave its unconditional backing on Tuesday to the criminal attempted coup against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, and declared its solidarity with the US puppet, Juan Guaido.

"Both sides reaffirmed their recognition of Juan Guaido as Venezuelan President with the task of organising free and fair elections to the extent that this is possible. They declare their solidarity with the Venezuelan people in their struggle to reestablish democracy," read the statement. The "Brazilian side" also expressed its disappointment "over the expulsion of the German ambassador in Caracas by the Maduro regime."

No lie is gross enough for the German government and its new ally in Brasilia. It is plain for all to see that the events in Venezuela are not about "reestablishing democracy," but a US-led coup aimed at bringing to power a right-wing, pro-imperialist puppet regime in Caracas. Berlin is not only motivated to support this operation by the prospect of getting its hands on the world's largest oil reserves, but also of expanding its political and economic influence throughout the region.

The German government is collaborating in this with the most right-wing government in Latin America, which it is simultaneously praising to the skies. Following his meeting

with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday and prior to his departure for Colombia, Maas said that while Bolsonaro had caused some confusion with some of his previous statements, “what I heard today about Brazil’s engagement on the international stage and what we were able to agree in a joint statement was exactly what we had hoped for.” It proved “the value of personal meetings,” and that one “shouldn’t just shake one’s head from afar.”

In the context of these comments, Maas’s remark that he went into politics “because of Auschwitz” takes on an entirely new meaning. A former army officer, Bolsonaro is an open fascist and admirer of the Brazilian military dictatorship that ruled the country from 1964 to 1985, and imprisoned, tortured, and killed tens of thousands of students and workers. Bolsonaro is notorious for his rants against blacks, homosexuals, and socialism. In one of his first speeches after his inauguration as president, Bolsonaro proclaimed, “Brazil über alles, God above all.” He then waved a Brazilian flag and declared, “That’s our flag, and it will never be red. Unless and only if our blood is necessary to keep it green and yellow.”

The fact that following his “personal meeting” with Bolsonaro, Maas no longer wants to “shake his head from afar” about such statements speaks volumes about the character of the grand coalition, the most right-wing German government since the downfall of the Third Reich. Its refugee policy is just as influenced by the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) as its rearmament of the police, intelligence agencies, and the army. In its foreign policy, the grand coalition is also working closely with the AfD. A member of Maas’s delegation to Iraq last year was Petr Bystron, the AfD’s representative on the German parliamentary foreign affairs committee.

The German imperialist offensive in Latin America, which the government intends to continue at a “Latin America-Caribbean conference” in Berlin on May 28, is also supported by the AfD. In an interview with *Sputnik Deutschland*, the AfD’s parliamentary group spokesman for foreign affairs, Armin-Paulus Hampel, praised Maas’s cooperation with Bolsonaro, stating, “Yes, the meeting is in general important, because I have to acknowledge that the German Foreign Minister is right about one thing: German policy has ignored South America for far too long.” However, he does not believe that the German government should intervene in South America with “basic demands for democracy, human rights, gender, and the ‘German do-gooders.’”

Maas apparently took this advice to heart. Alongside the support for the attempted coup in Venezuela, the joint Brazilian-German statements mainly focused on developing economic, foreign policy, and defence policy cooperation. Maas and his Brazilian counterpart, Ernesto Araujo, agreed to “breathe new life into economic cooperation and bilateral investment in close consultation with the private sector,” according to the statement.

In the “area of defence,” they acknowledged “the pace of progress” and confirmed “the interest in establishing a bilateral strategic dialogue.” Also discussed was “the participation of German firm Thyssenkrupp in the building of four light Tamandare-class frigates for the Brazilian navy.” Maas and Araujo also reaffirmed “their joint commitment to reform the UN Security Council to make it more representative, more legitimate, and more efficient.” They also agreed “to regularly exchange reports of our experiences in UN peacekeeping missions.”

Like Bolsonaro, Araujo is also a right-wing extremist nationalist, who denounces climate change as a “left-wing conspiracy theory” and boasts about combatting “cultural Marxism.” His father, Henrique Fonseca de Araujo, was a state prosecutor at the time of the military dictatorship and blocked the extradition of SS commander Gustav Franz Wagner, who was deputy commandant of the Sobibor concentration camp, to Israel, Austria, Poland, and Germany. Ernesto Araujo continues to defend his father to this day, claiming that he was merely acting according to “the rule of law.”

Even though the grand coalition is openly cooperating with fascist forces, the nominally “left” opposition parties also back its foreign policy. In a statement from May 1, Green Party foreign policy spokesman Omid Noripur “calls on the German government to insist that the issue of Venezuela remains high on the agenda of the UN and the European Union until new elections and a change of power has been made possible.”

The Left Party already gave its stamp of approval to **the imperialist-led** offensive against Venezuela at its European election party congress at the end of February. The Left Party is now serving as an informant and go-between for German imperialism in the region.

At the end of April, the Left Party European policy spokesman in the German parliament, Andrej Hunko, travelled to the country for 11 days to gain an overview of the situation. In a post on his Facebook page, he boasted that along with Maduro, he met “with Guaido and several other leading representatives of the opposition.” Guaido had “introduced him to a

number of trade union leaders who oppose the government.” He also “took part in a parliamentary session as an observer.”

The Left Party’s stance largely overlaps with that of the government, but it is pushing for Germany to advance its imperialist interests more independently of Washington and to assess the situation on the ground more realistically. One problem is “that the European governments often base themselves on the reports and narratives of the most extreme elements in the opposition,” which are working closely with the United States, continued Hunke. The German government also believed that the Maduro government “would be overthrown in a few days or weeks.” But this was “a totally inaccurate assessment of the situation in the country.”

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) is the only party that opposes all of the imperialist intrigues of the parliamentary parties, and is arming the growing opposition among the working class to the return of fascism, militarism and war with a socialist perspective. Our statement **on** the European elections declares, “The SGP is standing in the European elections in May 2019 to oppose the rise of the far-right, the growth of militarism, and glaring social inequality. Together with our sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International, we fight across Europe against the EU and for the unification of the continent on a socialist basis. This is the only way to prevent a relapse into fascist barbarism and war.”