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By Johannes Stern
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German government and Greens promote military mission in Persian Gulf

Following the official rejection of a US-led military mission in the Persian Gulf, the German government is actively pursuing its campaign for a European war mission in the region. “We want a European mission,” stressed Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (SPD) on Monday during a visit to Slubice in Poland. However, it would “take time to convince the EU of this.”

Deputy government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer made similar remarks at a press conference. “In principle, the German government continues to consider the proposal of a maritime protection mission by European states as worthy of consideration, and we are also in exchange with our European partners,” she explained. There will be “further talks this week between ... Germany and France” and there will also be “further talks on the subject in Brussels.”

Demmer didn’t rule out a possible German participation in “a US-led mission” at some point in the future. “The chancellor [Angela Merkel] and the federal government do not see any participation in a US-led mission in the current situation or at the present time,” she explained. But things that are “directed far into the future” could not “be confirmed here” and she did not want to “speculate here on what else could be possible.”

The statements by Demmer and Maas underline that Germany’s rejection of Washington’s request has nothing whatsoever to do with military restraint or even pacifism. Rather, against the background of growing transatlantic conflicts, German imperialism is

preparing to assert its economic and geostrategic interests more militarily independent of Washington. The Greens play a particularly aggressive role here.

“Germany must take responsibility and ensure that Europe acts as one and with its own voice in this tense situation,” demanded Robert Habeck, chairman of the Green Party, in an interview with the *Passauer Neue Presse* this weekend. He could imagine “Germany participating in a European mission if this would help to de-escalate. ... But in no case under American leadership.”

“There is an independent European interest in the Iran conflict,” Habeck emphasized. “Europe can no longer rely on others to represent its interests. It must become capable of *Weltpolitik* [world politics].”

The choice of words alone makes clear which reactionary and megalomaniac agenda Habeck has in mind. *Weltpolitik* was the buzzword under which the German Reich at the end of the 19th century turned to an imperialist foreign and colonial policy that developed into the mass slaughter of the First World War. Since 2014 the infamous term, which has long been taboo following the crimes of German imperialism in two world wars, is once again being revived in politics and the media to promote an aggressive foreign and great power policy.

Germany was “too big and economically too strong merely to comment on world politics from the sidelines,” then foreign minister and current president of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democratic Party, SPD), declared at the Munich Security Conference 2014.

The year before, the Greens had participated in the elaboration of the strategy paper titled “New Power, New Responsibility: Elements of a German Foreign and Security Policy for a Changing World,” which served as a blueprint for the **revival of German militarism**. Now, the Greens see their primary task in enforcing this war policy against the enormous opposition of the population.

On Tuesday, former Green Party chairman Cem Özdemir boasted on the ZDF talk show “Markus Lanz” that his party—with the invasion of Kosovo by the Bundeswehr [federal armed forces] in 1998—had organized the first German war mission since the end of the Second World War. “It was us in the government who first sent the Bundeswehr ‘out of area’ and that was quite tough,” he explained. “Think of the party conference in Bielefeld back then, when a bag of red paint burst against [the then Green foreign minister] Joschka Fischer’s ear. We don’t avoid these kinds of questions.”

Özdemir then attacked the military policy of the Grand Coalition and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)-led Ministry of Defense from the right. “I believe the Bundeswehr should be decently equipped. When you send people somewhere, you have to make sure that they are equipped to take care of their own safety and that they are able to do their job properly,” he said in rage. “The Bundeswehr must finally be led in such a way that the soldiers we recruit can do their jobs. Unfortunately, this is not the case at present.”

Özdemir, who was brought into play by Lanz as a possible future defence minister, felt visibly comfortable in this role. Again and again he made it clear that the Greens were now the best lobbyists for the military and the arms industry.

“If anyone tells me and says we need this kind of equipment and this amount of money for an operation, no Green secretary of defence will say no to it.” The Bundeswehr is doing “a damn good job for our country, at home and abroad, and one can only say, ‘Thank you.’” He also stated that he would have “no problem” with the fact that soldiers in uniform “inform about their work” at public schools. After all, they are “part of our society.”

Özdemir’s appearance speaks volumes about the turn to the right of the wealthy middle classes, which the Greens represent and whose social and political interests turn them into increasingly furious defenders of German imperialism. Their penchant for the military is reminiscent of the nationalist war frenzy of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers on the eve of the World War II.

Visibly thrilled, Özdemir reported on his recently completed one-week **internship with the Bundeswehr**: “I did not serve in the Bundeswehr, but I send people in up to 10 mandates, which we are currently deciding in the Bundestag and with each individual mandate we decide on young people whom we send somewhere, and some lose their lives in the process.” He wanted to “be there from morning till night and talk to soldiers and have the opportunity to feel who I am sending where ...”

The interviews with Özdemir and Habeck, who is increasingly promoted by the media as a possible future chancellor, underscore one thing above all: a federal government with the participation of the Greens—whether in alliance with the CDU/Christian Social Union (CSU) and Free Democratic Party (FDP) or with the SPD and the Left Party—would not only continue the policy of militarism, rearmament and social austerity, but would further intensify it.

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