

# The mask falls: Germany's Red-Green government and the bombing of Iraq

**Ulrich Rippert**  
**29 December 1998**

Nothing has more clearly revealed the true nature of the German Red-Green (Social Democratic Party-Green Party) governing coalition than its support for the American bombing terror attack against Iraq. This action alone belies all the descriptions of the coalition as a 'left government'.

What can one expect from a government which justifies the bombing of a former colonial land which has been bled white by years of economic sanctions, and repeats the most stupid and outrageous propaganda lies of the aggressor? How will such a government deal with its own people?

According to the US Pentagon, during the 70 hours of air strikes over four nights, 100 targets were bombed. Some 415 cruise missiles were fired, including 325 Tomahawks from US war ships and 90 from fighter planes--more missiles than were launched in the entire gulf war of 1991. In addition, hundreds of bombs were dropped. The first estimates from the US military reported 28 targets destroyed and another 46 severely damaged. Iraqi officials claimed heavy civilian casualties.

On the second day of the bombardment German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder declared that the military intervention was 'the result of the stubborn refusal of Saddam Hussein to collaborate with the UN inspectors in controlling weapons of mass destruction'. And further: 'Our solidarity with our NATO partners is without question.' The chairman of the Social Democratic (SPD) fraction in the Reichstag, Peter Struck, declared the military action to be 'regrettable, but necessary'.

As to whether the German government would be prepared to give more extensive, active support, Defence Minister Sharping (SPD) declared there had been no requests in that direction and therefore such additional support was not a current issue for the government. However the chairman of the defence committee, Wieczorek (SPD), did not exclude the possibility of

'logistical support'.

Anyone who expected criticism of the military action by the leading politicians of the Green Party was quickly disappointed. On the second day of bombing, during an official visit to Dublin, Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer appeared before cameras, furrowed his brow and assumed his very best posture as statesman. He proceeded to repeat the exact formulation used by then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1991 to justify German support for the gulf war: 'Saddam Hussein bears full responsibility'. His state minister, Ludger Vollmer, reckoned to be a 'left' in the Greens, said on the same morning: 'The government regrets that it has come to this military confrontation. Nevertheless, we say very clearly that the ultimate responsibility is born by Saddam Hussein.'

In its edition of December 18 the conservative newspaper *Tagesspiegel* commented: 'As well the defence politician Angelika Beer, up until recently reckoned to be strongly left-orientated, framed her criticism in vocabulary faithful to the line of the coalition: apprehension, reservations, regret.'

The opportunism of the Greens is virtually boundless and takes increasingly bizarre forms. Twenty years ago this party appealed to many young people as an ecological and pacifist opposition movement. Now it is ready to agree to anything and everything. Even two years ago, if someone had predicted that the next German foreign minister would be called Fischer and that in his second month in office he would agree to an American attack on Iraq, that person would have been ridiculed and Fischer himself would have protested.

Who does not recall the innumerable resolutions and endless debates in which the Greens emphasised their 'pacifist principles' and pledged themselves to non-violence? 'Make peace without weapons!' 'Blue helmets yes--Green helmets no!' 'Peace maintenance, but no peace at the price of military force!' etc., etc. Even their party

programme of this year, agreed at their conference in Magdeburg, states: 'Bundnis 90/The Greens refuse to support military peace missions and war interventions'.

Since their participation in the government, the Greens have demonstrated the hollowness of their protest politics of the past. They have no independent answer to the complex problems of society and adapt without a quiver to the political machinery in Bonn and Berlin. The same party that loudly proclaimed prior to the elections: 'The change is to Green', declared after the election: 'The new consists in the fact that everything stays as it was' (Fischer, in an interview with the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*).

Fischer is well acquainted with the strategic interests pursued by the American government with its provocative offensive. During the gulf war seven years ago he spoke at demonstrations and demanded: 'No blood for oil!' Now he is too cowardly to call anything by its real name. Instead he repeats the most outlandish lies of American propaganda.

The claim that Saddam Hussein has provoked the military attack is more absurd today than it was seven years ago. Since then UN inspectors have searched all relevant factories and production facilities. The American secret services have unparalleled information about weapons capacities in Iraq. The protocol of the UN Special Commission makes clear that the Iraqi government has co-operated closely over a long period of time with the inspectors. In the four weeks from the middle of November to the middle of December of this year alone, 427 facilities were inspected. Apart from a very few, insignificant limitations, no restrictions were placed on the inspectors.

Fischer and the other philistines in the Bonn government soar above the blatant contradictions of their own arguments. There was no proof of a refusal on the part of the government in Iraq to carry out the UN conditions. But more to the point: since when has such a refusal been regarded as a sufficient basis for a brutal bombardment of a people? What about Israel, which has for years ignored UN resolutions?

Moreover, the US government has bombed Iraq ostensibly to ensure the carrying out of UN decisions. But it has undertaken the action with flagrant disrespect for the decisions and leading bodies of the UN. The UN Security Council was seeking a political solution. It was given no advance notice of the bombing attack.

A few more thoughtful voices in Germany have drawn attention to this fact. In the *Frankfurter Rundschau* of

December 19 Karl Grobe writes: 'The president of the USA, Bill Clinton, ordered the limited military attack on Iraq at the same time that the issue of Iraq was being dealt with by the Security Council of the UN. That three of the five standing members of this supposedly highly regarded world body, three powers possessing the right to veto, not only had, but still have, considerable reservations, should not have escaped the notice of the president, despite the political diversions incurred by his private indelicacy.' Grobe poses the question: 'Was the abuse of the council calculated and desired?'

The question of the UN has broad significance. For some time the Clinton administration has sought to free itself from the veto powers of the UN Security Council. With increasing insolence it has used its military power in order to impose its economic and political interests. A significant motivation behind the gulf war of 1991 was a desire to send a warning to the most important rivals of American economic interests, Japan and Germany. Both countries were, and still are, heavily dependent on oil imports from this region.

The latest military action against Iraq, taking place as it does on the eve of the introduction of the euro, is likewise intended to restrain Germany and the EU, and make clear who calls the tune with regard to world politics.

See Also:

*Protesters in Berlin denounce US-British aggression*

Voices against the war

[29 December 1998]

The bombing of Iraq:

A shameful chapter in American history

[19 December 1998]

*From environmental radical to imperialist politician*

The new German foreign minister: the Greens' Joseph Fischer

[6 November 1998]



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**