

German Green Party supports war against Afghanistan

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The German Green Party unconditionally supports the US war against Afghanistan. On October 6, immediately before the military attacks on Afghanistan, the Greens executive council, the party's highest body between conferences, voted by an overwhelming majority to support the war policies of the American government. With 44 votes in favour, 13 abstentions and 8 against, the council agreed a resolution including backing for military support by the German army.

The resolution reads: "At the request of the US, NATO has agreed to implement the mutual assistance provisions according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty... It did so following the submission of documents by the American government, which incontrovertibly establish that the terrorist organisation of bin Laden bears responsibility for the attacks. The call for mutual assistance gives the US the right to demand help against an armed attack, including military assistance. The German government also voted in favour of the NATO decision. This difficult decision is supported by BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN [Alliance 90/The Greens] in light of the terrorist attacks in the US."

The party's joint chairpersons, Claudia Roth and Fritz Kuhn, justified this position by claiming that the military actions planned did not amount to a war. "The attacks in New York represent a new, privatised form of violence, which has nothing in common with the classical concept of war and is something to which we must find answers," claimed Kuhn. Roth added: "Once again, it is not about a war against a country, or a war against a religion but rather about the struggle against terrorist violence. As such I do not exclude the use of repressive police and military measures."

The decision of the executive council states in a similar manner: "It is not about a war against a country,

a culture or a religion, but rather the fight against terrorists." In this connection, the party goes on to praise the "moderation" of the US government. "To the extent that an appeal for military aid is directed at Germany, requiring the agreement of the German parliament," the Greens conclude, "we call upon our parliamentary delegates to decide within the framework of these fundamental criteria."

Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who took part in the council meeting, even attempted to sell the war as a contribution to the liberation of women. "We have to ask, how do we stand with regard to our morality? Have there been, for example, demonstrations against the suppression of Afghan women?"

All of these arguments are threadbare and unfounded, in equal measure. The fact that leading members of the Greens are prepared to swallow such arguments says a great deal about the state of the organisation.

The continuous bombardment of an impoverished and defenceless country by the world's most powerful military nation has clearly demonstrated that what is at stake is not a police action against a few terrorists. It has, rather, the makings of a classical colonial war, which has as its aim the military suppression of an entire region and the establishment of regimes that are willing to place themselves at the beck and call of the USA.

Even the German press, which has, on the whole, uncritically regurgitated the official war propaganda, has allowed some of the real aims of the war to occasionally surface. A lead article in the October 12 edition of *Die Woche* comments: "Behind the struggle against terrorism appears the hidden aim of an expedition to secure the oil resources of central Asia and the entire Middle East."

And in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of October 10, under

the headline “The sweet scent of petroleum”, Rudolph Chimelli points to the real background to the war in Afghanistan. He quotes an Indian diplomat in Uzbekistan saying, “When the Americans first come here, then they will stay for ever.” The diplomat comments further, “the long term geo-strategic interests of the US in central Asia and its raw materials are much more important than the actual noise of war or bin Laden, the joker in the ‘Great Game’.”

In the case of some representatives of the Greens, it is difficult to decide where political shortsightedness, naivety and ignorance ends and cynicism and lies begin. For his part, foreign minister Fischer is fully conscious of the fact that at the heart of this war, and Germany’s participation in it, are very different issues than a police action against terrorists or the liberation of women in Afghanistan. Rather it heralds Germany’s participation in establishing a new world order that has been announced by the bloody attacks on Afghanistan.

Together with Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), who last week told parliament about the “new understanding of German foreign policy,” in which “military action” also plays a role, Fischer is concerned to strengthen the role of Germany as a Great Power. “The issue is to create a world order that no longer permits zones of disorder or specifically... the complete loss of political order”, he declared following Schroeder’s speech. Fischer made clear that Germany intended to play an important role in this new world order as force for order. He finished his contribution with the warning, “the Europeans would be marginalised in the new world order” if the process of European integration did not proceed rapidly enough.

Der Spiegel magazine commented, “The chancellor’s national ambitions and the plea for Europe by his foreign minister belong together. With the step by Germany into the cold reality of world events it first appears possible for Europe to act on a global basis. The Germans’ new positioning is tricky. Fischer is aware of nervous reflexes arising from German hegemony in Europe and he attempts to diminish them through intensive diplomatic activity.”

Individual Greens may express reservations about the brutal actions of American and British armed forces. In the past days, and following a visit to refugee camps in Pakistan, Claudia Roth has called for a pause in the

bombing of Afghanistan to enable humanitarian aid to be delivered—as if she had not voted for the bombing just a few days previously. But when it is a question of German national interests then the Greens stand foursquare behind their foreign minister, even when this means war.

The draft for a new party programme published in July this year already spoke openly in favour of making German economic interests correspond with the aims of its foreign policy—although as usual, the proposal was wrapped up in the party’s rhetoric over ecological and social policies. The text reads: “The issue is to make legitimate social, ecological and economic interests correspond with the aims of a value-led foreign policy.”

The eight party functionaries who voted against the proposed resolution were expressing their concern that the Greens may not survive their public support for war. The leader of those voting no, parliamentary deputy Winfried Herrmann, complained, “In doing so, we are miles away from the rank-and-file. Perhaps you can explain military participation to the party functionaries at a state or local level in endless telephone calls. But you can’t reach our voters that way anymore.”



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