

Joschka Fischer in the US: German Green leader grovels for the camera

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Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister and Green Party leader, made an appearance October 31 on the Public Broadcasting System's nightly NewsHour television program. His groveling performance provided an object lesson of the ultimately reactionary logic of Green Party politics.

The day before, Fischer had suffered the indignity of a flagrant White House snub. Bush demonstrated his hostility to the Social Democratic-Green Party government in Berlin by refusing to invite Fischer to meet with White House officials. Instead, he was limited to a meeting with his American counterpart, Secretary of State Colin Powell (See "White House snubs German foreign minister").

Even his PBS "newsmaker" interview seemed to entail a slight. It was conducted, not by the well-known host of the program, Jim Lehrer, but rather his assistant, Ray Suarez. Lehrer was "away," Suarez informed the television audience at the start of the broadcast.

Fischer, who in his youth was known as an anti-war street demonstrator and left-wing pacifist, seized on the interview as an opportunity to swear political fealty to US imperialism and lay out his own government's militaristic credentials. Asked how serious the "irritations" were in US-German relations, Fischer hastened to profess his admiration and gratitude and eulogize the global role of the United States.

"Well, we are close allies," he began. "I mean, we will never forget what the United States did for us. Our democracy is based on the second chance which we got from the United States after 1945. And you defended us during the Cold War—five decades—and without the United States I don't believe that we would have reached so smoothly German reunification."

Next he all but boasted of German military participation in US-led or sanctioned operations around

the world: "We are fighting shoulder by shoulder, our special forces together with US special forces in Afghanistan. We are the biggest net troop contributor after the United States. I mean, we have now in Germany 10,000 troops in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, horn of Africa. And this reflects, I think, how close our relations are. But there are differences, of course, between allies, inside the family.... I think we have to solve these irritations and come back to normal business."

Questioned on Germany's position on a war with Iraq, Fischer emphasized the tactical and conjunctural character of his government's differences with Washington. It was, he maintained, a question of priorities, not basic aims.

He said, "We think the main threat—and this is not over—is international terrorism.... And we think we must ask the question whether this [US war plans against Iraq] is really strengthening the war against terror or not."

He then expressed concerns that a war against Iraq would destabilize the Middle East, and suggested that German anxieties would be calmed if the US pledged to maintain a long-term military presence in Iraq in the aftermath of a war that toppled the Saddam Hussein regime:

"Will the United States then stay there and guarantee peace and stability in this very dangerous neighbor region of Europe? This is the second most important question."

Returning to the theme of German military deployments around the world, Fischer made perhaps his most revealing remark: "When I started in the office of foreign minister, I mean, we had some soldiers in Bosnia. But then it cost us about 200 million, then deutsch marks. Today we have, well, almost 10,000

troops. If you would have asked me one-and-a-half years ago whether German troops will be in ... Afghanistan, I would say, 'Never ever. What are we doing there?'"

With these last words Fischer pointed, unwittingly, to the political hopelessness of the eclectic mixture of middle-class protest, environmentalism, pacifism and identity politics that form the basis of the Green Party's program. If one takes Fischer at his word, then even those at the summit of his party are entirely at the mercy of social and political forces which they do not comprehend.

Such is the inevitable fate of a party and political program that reject the possibility and necessity of socialist revolution, and deny that the working class is the social force upon whose revolutionary potential a struggle against imperialist war must be based. Fischer and the German Greens provide one more historical proof that reformist-pacifist parties inevitably adapt themselves to the requirements of "their" national ruling class, and embrace its imperialist aims and methods. The process is all the more rapid and complete once such parties assume governmental power.



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