

Germany: Green Party attacks peace marches

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German peace groups recently organized their traditional “Easter March” against war and militarism. This year, the protests were centred on the Iraq war and the expansion of the German military mission in Afghanistan. Leading Green Party politicians, whose parliamentary group had voted for the deployment of the Luftwaffe (Air Force) in the south of Afghanistan, have now attacked those organising the Easter Marches.

Green Party leader Claudia Roth accused the organizers of the anti-war protests of having only a “black-and-white view.” According to Roth, their statements said “notoriously little” about how such international crises could be countered. Too often, she said, the view of those on the Easter Marches was limited to a narrow “rejection of the military” option, while the United Nations did not even rate a mention in the calls for the demonstrations. This was a “failure of peace politics.” Instead, some of the appeals to support the demonstrations gave the impression that the US government, the European Union and the German political establishment were “a single axis of evil,” Roth said.

Franziska Eichstädt-Bohlig, the leader of the Green Party parliamentary group in the Berlin city legislature, derided the Easter Marches as “not a contemporary form of anti-war protest.” The peace marches have decayed into “a ritual,” which was only directed against war, but offered no “differentiated and positive answers” to complex and contradictory situations. World conflicts could not be solved by “disarmament alone.” The world was more complicated than just “for or against peace,” said Eichstädt-Bohlig.

Reinhard Bütikofer, who along with Claudia Roth is co-leader of the Greens, expressly defended Germany’s international military missions. The world would be “far more uncertain” without the deployment of German troops in Afghanistan or in the Lebanon, he told the media.

In a press interview, Bütikofer opined regarding the peace role of the German Armed Forces: “Without the necessary civilian construction of the country in Afghanistan and also protecting the important democratic impulse militarily, nothing could succeed.”

This is pure war propaganda. In reality, the NATO troops in Afghanistan provide just as little protection for “democracy” as the American troops that are occupying Iraq. They are protecting the puppet regime of Hamid Karzai, who came to power through the US military and is subservient to the imperialist powers. Karzai’s influence does not extend beyond Kabul, and popular resistance to his regime is constantly growing.

In order to support Karzai, the German Armed Forces are working in the north of the country with local warlords and drug barons. The warlords’ trade in weapons and drugs is tolerated, and in return, the warlords agree not to undertake any action against the weak central government. Last year in Afghanistan, more opium was produced than ever before.

In the south, the suppression of the resistance takes on ever more brutal forms. Thousands of civilians are falling victim to what is euphemistically called “the fight against the Taliban.” In the meantime, the occupation troops are deeply hated throughout the population.

As with the war against Iraq, the great powers are also pursuing imperialist goals in the occupation of Afghanistan. In their struggle for control of energy sources and for geo-strategic interests, Afghanistan takes on an extraordinarily important position, with its borders on Iran, Pakistan and the former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The open attack by the Greens on the pacifists organizing the Easter Marches (the Network of Peace-cooperatives) marks a new stage in the party’s turn to the right.

Since they entered the German government in 1998

and Green leader Joschka Fischer took over responsibility for foreign policy, the Greens have abandoned their former pacifist views and become enthusiastic proponents of international military deployments. But they had always tried to retain the pacifists within their ranks, at least by making various verbal concessions. That is no longer the case. Now, the Greens are attacking the peace movement in a way that in the past would have been expected only from the Christian Democrats. There are essentially two reasons for this.

First, the time has passed in which German foreign policy could be disguised with pacifist clichés. Washington's aggressive foreign policy and the American debacle in Iraq have also forced Germany to defend its international interests with increasing aggressiveness and with military means.

Former Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer expressed this clearly in a speech at Berlin's Humboldt University in mid-March. He began his speech with the question, "Are we Europeans prepared to solve the problems that have resulted from the self-weakening of the United States as a result of their policy of unilateralism, and which led them into the disaster of the Iraq war?" And he ended the speech with the demand for a "new foreign and security policy responsibility" for Europe under German leadership.

Fischer expressly endorsed a stronger military commitment. Of the German deployment to the Lebanon, he said the present situation was no longer acceptable in which the German navy is limited to the Lebanese coast, keeping the "extraordinarily dangerous Armada of the Hezbollah" in check, while other allies are "pulling the chestnuts out of the fire" in the country itself.

Second, since the Greens failed to secure a majority together with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), they are aspiring to a coalition with the Christian Democrats. A coalition of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU), the Liberal Democrats (FDP) and the Greens would enjoy a numerical majority in the Bundestag (federal parliament) and could replace the grand coalition of the CDU/CSU and SPD, which is running into increasing problems. Fischer's Humboldt speech reads like a renewed application for the post of the foreign minister. It contained nothing that CDU Chancellor Angela

Merkel could not accept.

Party chief Bütikofer has stressed repeatedly in the past months that his party is aiming at closer co-operation on different levels with the CDU/CSU.

And for some time in the Berlin city legislature, which is presently ruled by a coalition of the SPD and Left Party, the CDU chairman Friedbert Pflüger has been striving to establish good relations with the Greens. He has made no secret of the fact that he considers a coalition of the two parties desirable. The Berlin Greens are flattered and for their part stress the increasing political common ground with the CDU. A Christian Democratic-Green Party coalition in the German capital would set a precedent for federal politics.



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