

# Germany: SAV promotes illusions in the Left Party

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At the end of February, Socialist Alternative (SAV), the German followers of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers International, published a statement in the run-up to the Left Party's national congress. Headlined, "For a Socialist Change of Course," the statement deplored the "de-radicalisation" of the Left Party and urged its reorientation toward a "real socialist programme."

The SAV would like to give the impression that the development of the Left Party is an open question and the party can evolve to become a genuine advocate of the interests of working people. By such means the SAV works to fuel illusions and help lay a dangerous trap for the working class.

With the worsening of the international economic crisis and the outbreak of mass protests throughout Europe, political formations like the Left Party become increasingly significant for the ruling class. They serve to block the independent mobilisation of the working class in a socialist direction.

At the same time, the intensification of the class struggle forces every tendency to take a clear political position. In the case of the Left Party, its rapid move to the right makes it less useful to the ruling elite as a means of diverting the working class from a genuine socialist perspective.

In recent years, the Left Party has demonstrated that wherever it takes on government responsibility it acts ruthlessly to uphold the interests of the ruling elite against the mass of the population. The prime example is its coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in the Berlin city legislature (Senate).

The SPD-Left Party coalition has governed the capital for more than seven years. During this time, the Senate has provided €21.6 billion of public funds to underwrite a major bank (the Berlin Bankgesellschaft), has eliminated over 15,000 public sector jobs while cutting wages by up

to 12 percent, and has carried out massive cutbacks in education, cultural, sports and leisure facilities.

In recent months, the speed of the rightward development of the Left Party has increased considerably. Its support for the federal government's €500 billion rescue package for the banks, the public declarations of solidarity with Israeli aggression in Gaza by leading members, and the official support for the European Union espoused at the party's recent European congress demonstrate that the Left Party has adopted the line of the government on all substantial questions. This should be seen as preparation for direct participation in the next federal government, whose central mission will be to shift the entire burden of the economic crisis onto the working class.

In this situation, the SAV regards its most important task to be the encouragement of new illusions in the Left Party. This was the purpose of its February statement, which, despite its criticisms of the party's actual policies, reads like an advertisement for the Left Party. Its basic theme, repeated ad nauseam, is what the Left Party could be, without ever explaining the basis for the belief that the Left Party could be anything other than what it is.

The SAV statement recognizes, at least in words, the necessity for a movement opposed to shifting the burden of the international economic crisis onto the working class, as well as for a party "that can provide the movement with a socialist perspective." But the SAV immediately attributes this task to the Left Party, saying, "If it presented genuine alternatives, it could develop into an aggressive mass party with tens of thousands of new members."

The SAV credits the Left Party in its electoral campaigns with disseminating socialist ideas, and declares its belief that "this party is fundamentally different from all other parties." The SAV then formulates 10 demands, which it says could, if carried out, increase the

attractiveness of the Left Party. The SAV states: "If it contested election campaigns with the following demands, it could become a real point of attraction for those looking for an alternative."

The SAV fails to explain why the Left Party avoids such demands. Indeed, the substantial part of its statement devoted to outlining the right-wing policies of the Left Party is used to argue for the necessity of participating inside the Left Party to build an internal opposition.

The attitude of Marxists towards parties and political organizations is always based upon a concrete analysis of their class character, which necessarily finds its reflection in their programme and policies. One must pose the question: Does the Left Party express—albeit in a distorted way—the increasing radicalisation and leftward development of the working class, or is it rather a manoeuvre by the ruling class to divert this leftward development into harmless channels?

In numerous articles, the *World Socialist Web Site* has analyzed and exposed the character of the Left Party as an instrument of the ruling class tasked with diverting and containing the radicalization of the working population. The struggle for a socialist perspective can only be conducted against the Left Party and all of its "left" supporters.

The politics of the SAV proceed from the opposite standpoint. Its entire history, which can be traced back to the British Militant Tendency, is marked by the attempt to subordinate workers to the old labour bureaucracies. The less the Left Party finds a resonance in the working class, the more the SAV seeks to encourage illusions in it.

This cannot be explained as a mistake or as the unintended consequences of a wrong estimation of the Left Party. The SAV is consciously seeking to obstruct the development of a socialist mass party of the working class. It therefore increasingly directs its efforts against the growing influence of the world Trotskyist movement, which today is represented only by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), and in Germany, the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG—Socialist Equality Party).

This supporting role for the Left Party became very clear in 2006 during the elections for the Berlin city legislature. At that time, the organisation had just renamed itself from "Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)" to "Left Party—PDS," and was shortly to merge on a national level with the Election Alternative (WASG). After five years of SPD-PDS government policy in the Berlin city legislature, however, its right-wing character

had become obvious to many workers. Only the PSG posed a principled alternative to the Left Party in the elections.

The SAV used its influence inside the Berlin regional organization of the WASG to provide political cover for the Left Party with a manoeuvre. With the support of the SAV, the WASG stood its own candidates in the election in order to divert opposition from the left to the policies of the Left Party. In so doing, it received a great deal of publicity from the bourgeois media.

At the same time, the WASG used every opportunity to proclaim that its own candidacy was directed only against the Left Party participating in the Berlin city legislature, not against the Left Party itself. It stressed that it considered this step necessary to secure the project of constructing the Left Party at the federal level.

Since then, the SAV has reacted to each rightward development of the Left Party by moving ever closer to it. Last summer, when supporters of former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder carried out a move to the right in the SPD leadership, the Left Party reacted by protesting its readiness to cooperate with the SPD. Thereupon, the SAV immediately announced that its members would be entering the Left Party. In so doing, the SAV abandoned its previous stance of standing its own candidates, at least in East Germany, where the Left Party is discredited by its participation in state governments.

The building of a European-wide and international socialist movement is an urgent necessity. This requires an unyielding struggle for the political independence of the working class. But this is possible only through a conscious political break with social reformist conceptions, as represented by the Left Party. This fight for the political independence of the working class stands at the centre of the European election campaign of the PSG, the German section of the ICFI.



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