

German Greens agitate for war

Peter Schwarz
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Three days after French, British and American bombs and missiles began raining down on Libyan cities and villages, Green politician Joschka Fischer published a virulent call for war. In an article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on Tuesday he directed his reproaches at his successor, Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, and Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The German government, which has been a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for two years, abstained in last Thursday's vote on the Libya resolution. Berlin formed a bloc with Russia, China, Brazil and India, who also abstained, against France, Britain and the US, rejecting the participation of German forces in the war.

Westerwelle, according to Fischer, "climbed down" when it came to the vote in the Security Council. "For me," he continued, "what remains is the shame for the failure of our government and, alas, those red and green opposition leaders who initially applauded this scandalous mistake." Foreign policy, he said, means "taking tough strategic decisions, even when they are anything but popular in domestic politics."

Fischer hardly bothered to mask his war propaganda with the usual humanitarian phrases. He alluded to the recklessness of the military adventure, writing: "The mission in Libya is risky, the new players on the ground are unclear as regards strategy and the future of the country." But such concerns "are not an alternative to action," he declared, because "in this region, we are speaking about immediate European and German security interests." It is "naïve to think that the most populous and economically powerful country of the EU could or should stay out of things there."

Fischer accused the government in Berlin of damaging the credibility of German foreign policy by abstaining in the Security Council, weakening Germany's position in Europe and kissing goodbye to "a permanent seat on the Security Council." Thus,

Fischer openly insisted on German military participation from the standpoint of strengthening Germany's position in Europe, North Africa and around the world.

This blatant imperialist agitation comes as no surprise. It comes from the pen of a man whose political career began among the squatters in Frankfurt's west end and who today lives in a villa in Berlin's exclusive Dahlem district. Fischer is arguably the most disgusting embodiment of the social types who joined the 1968 protest movement in order to secure their own social advancement.

He has long provided the ruling class with important services. In 1999, he pushed the Greens into backing the war against Yugoslavia, the first time Germany had participated in a war of aggression since 1945. In 2001, as foreign minister, he spearheaded German military participation in the Afghanistan war. The adoption of the welfare "reforms" embodied in the Hartz laws, reversing decades of gains in working class living standards, would not have been possible without the active support of Fischer.

Fischer is not alone in his criticism of the government. Merkel has come under heavy pressure at home and abroad because of her stance on the Libya war. The criticism runs right through the political parties and is largely supported by the media.

Fischer's long-time friend and political mentor, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, was one of the first to support the Libya war. The spokesman of the 1968 student movement in Paris today heads the Green faction in the European Parliament. He was the driving force behind a resolution supporting the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya. It was adopted almost unanimously by the European Parliament and was instrumental in the preparation of the current war.

On Sunday, Cohn-Bendit spoke out in the *Tagesspiegel*, accusing Berlin of "German

exceptionalism” and having “no sympathy for people who freed themselves through revolution.” Apparently, French President Sarkozy and British Prime Minister Cameron have such revolutionary sensibilities!

Klaus Naumann, a member of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) and formerly the inspector general of the German armed forces, wrote in almost identical terms as Fischer in Monday’s *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. He too said he was ashamed of the decision of the government and accused it of damaging German interests.

In 1992, Naumann authored the first draft guidelines for Germany’s defence policy, which remain in force to this day. They entrust the armed forces with the task, *inter alia*, of “maintaining free world trade and access to strategic raw materials.”

Other leaders of the governing parties have also publicly rebuked Chancellor and Christian Democratic Union (CDU) leader Merkel. The major restraint on their criticisms was the fear of being held responsible for defeat in upcoming state elections.

The Social Democratic Party (SPD) is split on the question of Libya. In a parliamentary debate on Friday, party parliamentary Chairman Frank-Walter Steinmeier and party leader Sigmar Gabriel sided with Merkel, while some SPD members ferociously attacked the government.

Gabriel then changed his attitude. On Sunday, in the *Tagesspiegel*, he charged the government with having “no internal fortitude in the fight against this murderous Libyan dictator,” adding that it had crumpled “before the power of this oil mafioso.” Its abstention had “isolated Germany internationally and divided Europe.”

The Green parliamentary group leader, Jürgen Trittin, also initially supported the government while other representatives of the Greens campaigned for involvement in the war.

The Merkel government has its own reasons for holding back from participation in the war. They have nothing to do with political principles, let alone pacifism.

Merkel was an early advocate of economic sanctions against the Libyan regime and her government stresses that it supports the objective of the war—the overthrow of Gaddafi. It has permitted the United States to use German bases for the attacks on Libya. The American

command centre is located near Stuttgart.

Merkel also sent German AWACS air surveillance units to Afghanistan to enable the US to divert surveillance planes from Afghanistan to Libya.

However, the German government is concerned that it could become embroiled in a military adventure in Libya in which France, Britain and the US would control events, not Berlin. In Libya, North Africa and the Middle East, Germany has far-reaching economic and political interests and fears losing out if it is subordinated to the reckless military actions of its economic rivals.

Berlin’s common front with the so-called BRIC countries in the Security Council is no accident. Given the economic and financial crisis in Europe, the German export industry, and with it German foreign policy, are increasingly oriented to these countries.

The cautious stance of the German government towards the Libya war is therefore dictated by imperialist interests, not by concern for the plight of a former colonial country that has become the target of imperialist aggression.

An imperialist war inevitably fuels tensions between the great powers, which then become the starting point for further and greater wars. The resulting strategic reorientation leads to violent internal political conflicts. This is the background to the current debate on the German position on the Libya war.

The working class cannot support any of the warring camps. It must develop its own independent policy and oppose the warmongers on both sides of the official debate.



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