

# How Germany's Left Party supports the war in Syria

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Syria is currently the victim of an imperialist crime of historic proportions. For months, the Western powers and their regional allies have incited a civil war, whipping up religious and ethnic antagonisms, and sending armed mercenaries into the country. Direct military intervention is also not excluded.

While official propaganda seeks to present the conflict as a popular uprising against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, in reality it is a deliberate attempt to bring about regime change from the outside, while simultaneously weakening Iran. The action against Syria is of a piece with the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Here too, tens or hundreds of thousands died because the US and its allies installed new rulers subservient to them.

The German government is deeply involved in these imperialist machinations, though it downplays them to avoid harming its economic relations with China and Russia, who have given political support to Assad. In contrast to the Iraq war, however, there are currently no protests against this.

This does not reflect the public mood—various opinion polls show that an overwhelming majority reject any political or military intervention in Syria—but the changed position of the parties and organisations that once comprised the peace movement. Today, they stand completely in the camp of imperialism, participating actively in attempts to bring a pro-Western regime to power in Damascus.

This comes as no surprise in the case of the Greens. In 1998, when they joined the federal government and supported the war against Yugoslavia, these former pacifists were prepared to move into the camp of imperialism. Ever since, they have been among the most enthusiastic advocates of international military operations by the *Bundeswehr* (German Armed Forces).

The Green Party federal chair, Claudia Roth, has repeatedly called for harsher action against Syria, and for further sanctions. Going even further than the government, former Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has called for Libyan-style military intervention. "A great humanitarian catastrophe [is] taking place there", he told *Bild am Sonntag*. "That is why I positively support the establishment of a no-fly zone".

In Libya, the establishment of a no-fly zone served to justify military intervention by NATO.

Even more remarkable than the role of the Greens is that of the Left Party, in which pseudo-left groups such as Marx21 and SAV are active, along with sections of the former peace movement such

as the Peace Cooperative and the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy. They are all deeply implicated in the events in Syria, collaborating with the German government via numerous channels.

This represents a division of labour. While Berlin cultivates close contacts to the Syrian National Council (SNC) and to the Free Syrian Army (FSA)—which are supported and armed by the US, France, Britain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar—the Left Party has links with other political movements that compete with the SNC and the FSA and also have numerous connections with them. In this way, they provide the German government with additional room for political manoeuvre, strengthening Berlin's position vis-à-vis allied powers, such as the US.

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle has made Germany a centre of intrigues against the Syrian government. In Berlin, under the auspices of the pro-government Foundation for Science and Politics (SWP) think tank, leading representatives of the SNC and other opponents of Assad have been meeting for months to elaborate plans for his overthrow. This project works in secret and first came to public notice in August. It is funded by the German and American foreign ministries, among others.

The name of the project, "The Day After", shows what is at stake as far as Berlin is concerned. It wants to ensure that Germany is represented when the booty is divided up following a violent regime change. As the project's official report declares, a post-Assad regime should "promote entrepreneurship" and "support equitable private sector development". In other words, it should ensure that areas of the Syrian economy presently controlled by the state are privatised and opened up for international investors.

The Left Party's activities extend these plans. Like few other political organisations in Germany, the party's Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLS), largely financed with public money, is networked with various wings of the Syrian opposition. In the last months, it has organised or supported several platforms addressed by Elias Perabo, the founder and spokesperson of the "Adopt a Revolution" (AaR) initiative.

Behind "Adopt a Revolution" stands an amalgamation of several organisations from the former peace movement, such as the Peace Cooperative and the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy, who are collecting money for the Syrian opposition. Outwardly, the alliance stresses (like the Left Party) that its activities are limited to supporting the peaceful opposition. One of its central claims is that the "strengthening of peaceful political

activists [makes] a military escalation more unlikely".

However, this separation of peaceful and armed opposition is a fiction, which merely serves to cover over the pro-imperialist direction of the campaign. In reality, the opposition groups being promoted by "Adopt a Revolution" collaborate with the FSA mercenaries. AaR spokesperson Christine Schweitzer has admitted that the "overwhelming majority of the opposition supports the presence of the Free Syrian Army".

"Adopt a Revolution" also enjoys close relations with the SNC, which is intimately linked to the FSA and continually calls for NATO military intervention. Three of the four participants at its first press conference on January 4 have since called for Western military intervention. Two are SNC members.

As well as contact with the SNC, the Left Party and its RLS foster links with the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC). Virtually no meeting of the foundation on the theme of Syria takes place without the presence of NCC representative Mais Elkrydee.

Founded one year ago, the NCC is an amalgamation of bourgeois parties with their roots in the country. The SNC, on the other hand, is largely dominated by exile politicians. The NCC is headed by the 80-year-old Hassan Abdel Asim. Originally a follower of the Egyptian Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, he formed the National Democratic Rally in 1979 along with a split-off from the Communist Party and four nationalist parties, and which today forms the backbone of the NCC.

Unlike the SNC, the NCC has sought a negotiated settlement with Assad and criticized foreign military intervention. It also maintains good relations with Russia. In April, an NCC delegation led by Abdel Asim visited Moscow and asked the Russian government to pressure Assad to make concessions.

However, the NCC is also seeking unification with the SNC. The two organisations signed an agreement to this end last November in Cairo, but this has never been realised. The NCC blames the SNC and its foreign backers for the failure of unity talks.

As the civil war intensified, the NCC increasingly moved away from its demand for a negotiated settlement. On August 26, it published a statement calling on the UN Security Council to intervene and demanding the transfer of the "murderous Syrian regime" to the International Criminal Court (ICC). If the Security Council adopted such a resolution, it would close the door to any negotiated solution.

The bourgeois forces assembled in the NCC could play an important role in a post-Assad regime. The entire history of the Middle East shows that the bourgeois nationalist and ex-Stalinist parties comprising the NCC are organically hostile to the interests of the oppressed masses and are ready to make a deal with imperialism.

Following the murder of the American ambassador to Libya, apparently by elements aligned with Al Qaeda, doubts are growing in Washington and in other western capitals whether it is advisable to rely too heavily on Islamist circles, such as those strongly represented in the FSA.

Since the US and its allies in the region presently reject any collaboration with the NCC—which was not invited to the opposition conference in Istanbul in March—the German

government also does not work openly with them. It leaves this task to the Left Party and its Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. From here, there are many lines of communications to the Foreign Ministry.

A particularly active role in supporting the imperialist conspiracy against Syria is being played by the groups that once, falsely, described themselves as Marxists.

Christine Bucholz, a member of Marx21 and a representative of the Left Party in the parliamentary Defence Committee, calls for "solidarity with the revolution" in Syria. The "revolutionary" forces to which she refers include not only the NCC, but also the German and US-backed FSA. She claims that these mercenaries are "rooted in the revolutionary process".

Marx21 is a component of the International Socialist Tendency, which also supports the FSA in its international publications.

The same applies to the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) and its German section, the Socialist Alternative (SAV), which is also in the Left Party. In April, the SAV argued for arming the Syrian opposition. It wrote, "Socialists support the right to bear arms by the rebels and revolutionary groups in face of the cold-blooded murder, torture and arrests of activists by the brutal Assad regime."

The SAV has since largely kept quiet, although the Syrian events dominate the headlines. Their last article on the events in Syria appeared on June 19.

The Pabloite Revolutionary Socialist League (RSB) also stands behind imperialist intervention in Syria. On April 1, it called for "solidarity with the Syrian revolution", likening all those opposed to Assad with revolutionaries rooted in the people, and calling for the "peoples of the world" to show "solidarity with the struggle for the definitive removal of this bloody regime." While saying not a word about the western intervention, the RSB described Russian support for the Assad regime as "scandalous".



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