

Germany's Left Party meets with the Syrian opposition

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On October 9 the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation—the German Left Party's think tank—and the German Peace Association organized a meeting in Berlin entitled: “Another Syria is possible!” Among those taking part in the discussion was the foreign policy spokesman for the Left Party, Wolfgang Gehrcke. Representing the Syrian opposition were Michel Kilo and Samir Eita—both members of the Syrian Democratic Forum (SDF).

The event fully confirmed the analysis of the WSWs that the Left Party is working as an adjunct of the German foreign ministry in the current imperialist offensive against Syria. In common with the Merkel government, the Left Party calls for regime change in Syria and has developed close links with the Syrian opposition.

In his speech to the meeting, Gehrcke explained that he supported German foreign policy in Syria in principle. He declared: “The federal government has acted in a wiser manner than I feared. Germany is not pushing for a military intervention”. He then added that he had personally praised Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle for his policy toward Syria.

At the beginning of his remarks, Gehrcke asserted it was difficult to get information about what was actually taking place in Syria. He therefore had to rely on various sources in order to obtain a reasonably accurate picture of the situation: “I rely on reports from friends in the Syrian opposition, federal government information, the German secret services and Russian sources”.

In other words, Gehrcke and the Left Party maintain close contact with the German government and intelligence services and are exchanging information with them. The party is playing an important role in the efforts by the German bourgeoisie to install a post-Assad regime

capable of ensuring German strategic and economic interests in Syria and the region. To this end there is a definite division of labor.

The Merkel government is working closely with those elements of the Syrian opposition supported by the US, France, Britain, Turkey and the Gulf monarchies, and which have been armed for the purpose of overthrowing the regime of Bashir Assad.

Within the framework of the so-called “The Day After” project, meetings are regularly held in Berlin under the auspices of the government-backed Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), involving high-level representatives of the Syrian National Council (SNC), the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the Local Coordination Committees (LCC) and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB).

The Left Party has links with those sections of the anti-Assad opposition that are not directly involved in “The Day After” project, and which in terms of foreign policy stand closer to Russia and also carry out work inside Syria. This permits the German state to cultivate relationships with groups with which it does not want to be publicly associated—out of consideration to its Western allies.

In his speech October 9, Gehrcke criticized the government for withdrawing its ambassador in Damascus and thereby closing off diplomatic channels with Syria. The Left Party regards its job as correcting this kind of “error”. Based on its postwar Stalinist past, the party has more links to “left” and secular opposition elements in Syria, plus sections of the Assad regime itself, than any other party in Germany. This makes the Left Party an important asset for the German government, which

thereby has increased opportunities to exert political influence on a post-Assad regime and strengthen German interests in competition with the other powers.

Regardless of certain clichés about a “peaceful and diplomatic solution to the conflict”, the Berlin meeting made clear that the policy of the Left Party had nothing in common with efforts to achieve genuine peace or pursue anti-imperialist politics. Its entire Syria policy is aimed at formulating a strategy best suited to defend German interests in Syria and the region.

This is the context in which one must analyse Gehrcke’s criticism of the government’s “The Day After” project. He described the project as a mistake that was “too selective” and too focused on a violent overthrow of the Assad regime. This had served to strengthen Assad rather than weaken him, he said. Assad’s regime was coming to an end, but a solution could only be found inside Syria.

Gehrcke and the Left Party also object to the fact that the German government has not included other Syrian opposition forces—such as the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC) or the Syrian Democratic Forum (SDF)—in its plans for a new regime. From the perspective of the Left Party, limiting German co-operation to those opposition groups with the closest links to the US not only undermines efforts to overthrow Assad, but also weakens the possibility of German imperialism gaining influence in a post-Assad Syria.

The Syrian Democratic Forum, which invited the Left Party to its latest meeting, is an organization composed mainly of secular and supposedly leftist forces. It has ties to Russia and advocates working together with a part of the regime after Assad’s overthrow.

Like the Left Party, the SDF occasionally criticizes the role of the United States, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Gulf states in the Syria conflict, but, according to its program, aims to “unite the entire spectrum of the Syrian opposition to overthrow the regime”. In its policy statement adopted April 17 in Cairo, the SDF also expressed its support for the Free Syrian Army, which is funded and armed by the US and its regional allies. At the meeting in Berlin the representatives of the SDF, Eita and Kilo, once again justified their armed struggle against Assad.

Eita said that “weapons are necessary even when there are side effects”. He also called for the unity of all sections of the opposition to overthrow Assad. Parts of the regime, he continued, would be given the opportunity to play a role, even after Assad’s downfall in Syria. Eita, the editor of the Arabic edition of *Le Monde*, was himself an adviser to the Assad regime for ten years, before shifting to the opposition.

Kilo, leader of the SDF and a long-time member of the Syrian opposition, reiterated the propaganda of the bourgeois media for a “humanitarian intervention” in Syria. He claimed that what was taking place in Syria was not a civil war, but rather “war by a brutal regime against its people”. Like all the other speakers on the podium, he defined the confrontations currently taking place as a “revolution”, declaring that the regime of Bashar Assad lacked any legitimacy and called for its overthrow.

In reality, the imperialist great powers and their regional allies in the strategically important region have been conducting a civil war for months aimed at replacing the present Syrian regime with a pro-Western puppet government. To this end, they are fuelling religious and ethnic tensions, arming and financing rebels and smuggling Islamic fighters into the country.

Preparations for direct military intervention are continuing apace. On the evening of the Left Party meeting in Berlin, it was announced that the Pentagon had stationed 150 secret special forces in Jordan. The CIA runs another base in Turkey that coordinates the delivery of weapons provided by Turkey and the Gulf monarchies to the rebels. For a number of days now, the Turkish military has been amassing troops and heavy equipment along the Syrian border and intensifying its provocations.



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