

German Pirate Party sets sail to the right

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Last weekend the German Pirate Party carried out a debate on its economic, foreign and social policy at a party conference in the city of Bochum. The resulting policy document, which has been deliberately drawn up in a vague form, is to serve as the party's program for the federal election due next year and enables the Pirates to participate in all possible government coalitions.

The program reveals that the Pirates are prepared to support and give political cover for German army combat missions abroad, as well as the brutal austerity measures being implemented in Greece and across Europe.

Nearly 2,000 members had come to Bochum to take part in the debates and votes. The debate was striking for the fact that despite the urgency of the issues, barely any mention was made of the current European crisis or the wars being fought in the Middle East.

Instead those in attendance spent considerable time discussing in detail environmental policy, the fight against corruption, and the protection of minors. The program now adopted makes very clear the stance the party will take in social struggles in coming months.

The party's economic program includes not only a clear commitment to the market economy, but also ideological justification for austerity policies. As was the case with the German Green Party, the Pirates argue that economic growth is not a crucial factor for measuring the prosperity of a society and that quality of life cannot be determined on the basis of financial possibilities. Under conditions of a recession, this cynical argument can serve as a justification for mass layoffs and wage cuts.

The Pirates even argue in favour of unemployment. In its passage on the "labour market," the party explains that full employment is "neither timely nor socially desirable." Technological development has made many jobs obsolete, they argue. The Pirates fail to explain,

however, why advances in technology should lead to unemployment and intensified pressure on the wages of those in work, instead of being used to raise the welfare of all, reduce working hours and create well-paid, socially useful forms of work.

While making such statements the program includes little that is concrete. Its demands for a minimum wage or an unconditional basic income remain totally meaningless because no figures are put forward and the form of their financing remains unspecified. Such details are vital, however, to determine whether such measures involve social downgrading (i.e., a pitifully low minimum wage) or genuine social advancement.

The readiness of the Pirate Party to use such demands to disguise social attacks is indicated by its policy on Europe. The relevant section makes no mention of the reactionary role of the European Union which is imposing austerity across the continent.

Instead the program stresses "the importance of European unity for peace, freedom, prosperity and the rule of law" and expresses its support for "the European idea."

Workers in Greece, Spain or Italy will rub their eyes in astonishment at such notions. In all of these countries the EU is seen as the instrument for brutal social cuts that lead to hunger, poverty and unemployment. At the same time, the EU is actively encouraging the dismantling of democratic rights and even tolerates the state support of fascist gangs responsible for the persecution of immigrant workers and political oppositionists.

In another motion which received support from 60 percent of delegates (but less than the required two-thirds majority to be passed), the majority of Pirates even expressed their support for the efforts of the German government to form a pan-European fiscal union: "The Pirate Party is firmly committed to Europe. It follows from this that we are willing to transfer the

responsibility for economic and fiscal policy to European institutions”, the motion reads.

The Pirates adopt a similar stance with regard to foreign policy, i.e., a refusal to address any specific question of world politics while supporting the increasingly aggressive foreign policy of German imperialism. The program declares that its foreign policy is not formulated to reflect “the interests of Germany or Europe,” but just a few paragraphs later proclaims the necessity of introducing international “open markets”, together with the political strengthening of both the EU and UN.

In a number of points, the Pirates declare their intention of intervening in other countries in order to assert not only certain rights such as “education, basic health care; freedom of religion and sexual self-determination”, but also “democracy” and “the free exchange of information, goods and commodities”.

The program does not specify how these measures should be brought about. Given the fact that every deployment of the German army during the past 15 years has been justified with precisely such arguments it is significant that the party has expressed itself against any ban on German army operations abroad. Under these conditions all the rhetoric about democracy and human rights is transformed into crude propaganda for war.

Overall, the new program clearly exposes the character of the Pirate Party. From its inception members of the organisation made a strict separation between the issue of democracy and prevailing social class contradictions. In a period when the markets and financial elite dominate every aspect of social life and are abolishing *de facto* any democratic control within the context of the euro crisis, the Pirates call for greater transparency and participation in Parliament.

The result is not an increase in the transparency of political decision making, but rather a new coat of paint for thoroughly discredited bourgeois parliamentary institutions—aimed especially at young people. The ruling elite in Germany readily took up this offer of assistance and organized a broad media campaign that catapulted the Pirates into three state legislatures within a short space of time.

In calling for more democracy while ignoring the real class antagonisms which prevail in society, the Pirates express the concerns of middle class layers that are

eager to ascend the social ladder and fearful of the workers’ resistance which has emerged against the massive social attacks taking place throughout Europe. On this basis, the Pirates have attracted reckless and politically ignorant social layers who, in the midst of a historic social counterrevolution in Europe, have agreed an economic program that does not even mention Greece.

The Pirate Party had earlier made its position clear when it declared its readiness to cooperate with the conservative Christian Democratic Union in Berlin and expressed its support for a constitutional “debt-brake” in the Saar regional election campaign. At the same time, in agreeing its new program, the party has now professionalized its approach. All the talk about human rights, democracy and European unity is aimed at providing political cover for massive social attacks and support for Germany’s imperialist foreign policy.



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