

Left Party offers its services as a prop of bourgeois rule

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As Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate Peer Steinbrück repels many former SPD voters with his pro-business policies, the Left Party is offering its services as a reliable prop of the bourgeois order. This was the dominant impression left by the Left Party congress in Dresden last weekend.

The media lavished praise and paid tribute to the congress's resolve. The right-wing *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (FAZ) applauds the Left Party for being a "stable party" of considerable merit. The *Frankfurter Finanzblatt* writes that its leaders, Katja Kipping and Bernd Riexinger, had done "solid work", even though the congress speeches were "less than brilliant".

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* welcomes the "truce" the new leadership seemed to have secured, following the "trench warfare" of the past year. Even the conservative *Die Welt* —which launched anti-Communist tirades at the party not too long ago—now writes that the Left Party has found new stability and is in top form "one year after its disastrous congress in Göttingen, which almost led to its demise".

This media acclaim is no accident. The Left Party is needed to prepare a switch to an SPD-Green Party coalition government. Although the anti-social policies of Chancellor Angela Merkel's government and its support for military adventures in Afghanistan and Syria have met with growing opposition, voter surveys indicate the SPD is losing instead of gaining electoral ground. The SPD is too well known and hated as the instigator of Hartz IV, the miserly unemployment benefits system.

SPD chairman Sigmar Gabriel is frantically beating the drum of social demagoguery. However, in his speeches to banking and business leaders, Steinbrück emphasises that he will continue and intensify the anti-social Agenda 2010 policies of the former SPD

government led by Gerhard Schröder. Steinbrück's latest decision to employ as his press spokesman Rolf Kleine, a yellow press journalist and former leading lobbyist for a real estate shark company, says more about the SPD's actual stance on "social justice" than all its congress resolutions.

The Left Party is endeavouring to arrest the decline of the SPD and present the SPD-Green ticket as a progressive alternative to the Merkel government. But support for the Left Party is fading. It received almost 12 percent of the vote at the last elections four years ago. Today, opinion polls show it would garner only half that amount, and might even fail to break the 5 percent threshold necessary for seats in the federal parliament.

This is the reason for the applause from editorial boards. Even IG Metall union boss Berthold Huber sent the Left Party official congratulations, wishing its delegates "intensive and productive consultations".

The congress speeches were marked by an obvious, absurd contradiction. In order to win votes, the speakers criticised the SPD and Greens, accusing them of being reluctant to fight the Merkel government. At the same time, they declared that their express aim in the election was to work for an SPD-Green government.

It is also well known that, wherever it has ruled in alliance with the SPD (as currently in Brandenburg, and for years in Berlin before that) or supported an SPD-Green government (as in North Rhine-Westphalia), the Left Party carried out precisely the social attacks it criticised in its congress and election campaign speeches.

Party chairman Bernd Riexinger exhorted delegates in Dresden: "Now the SPD wants us to believe it has learnt something. There's talk about 'a move to the left'. But that's still not livening up their election

campaign”. He said the reason was that the Social Democrats had settled for a candidate, “who the people believe would rather do anything than move to the left. Peer Steinbrück’s election campaign may well turn out to be a unique disaster”.

“People believe that Steinbrück would act as the millionaires’ henchman, rather than boldly reach into the pockets of the rich,” lamented Riexinger. He declared in conclusion that the SPD would be able to carry out “its programme” only in alliance with the Left Party.

His co-chairperson, Katja Kipping, put on the usual demagogic show, criticising the Greens as turncoats who had crossed over from pacifism to militarism. She said the Greens were the loudest backers of intervention in the Libyan war, but that it was at least fortunate they were unable to provide Germany with a defence minister at the time—an ironic reference to the record of former Green foreign minister Joschka Fischer. She complained that the Greens had turned olive green (the colour of German military uniforms), etc.

But at the end of her speech, Kipping stated that only by means of a “left-wing majority”—i.e. an SPD-Left Party-Green alliance—could social progress be achieved.

Parliamentary fraction head Gregor Gysi pleaded with delegates, “I ask the SPD and the Greens: When will you finally be ready to side with the majority of the population and apologise to the people for Agenda 2010? I further ask: When will you stop tinkering with the low-wage sector and temporary employment, and just get rid of them? When are you really going to put a stop to the abuse of contract working arrangements?”

The SPD has long since revealed its answers to these questions. A few weeks ago, it celebrated Agenda 2010 as a great success and announced plans for an Agenda 2020. Gysi’s demagoguery serves to promote the Left Party as a prop for the SPD and bourgeois rule. He called on the delegates to proceed “to the next stage”. Six years after its inception, it was now “firmly established” as a “political force to the left of social democracy”. It was now a matter of creating “real government majorities” in order to force the SPD to develop “policies in the interest of the population”.

The Left Party has moved further to the right since the leadership change in the autumn of last year, when Kipping took over the presidency in tandem with Riexinger, the Swabian trade union bureaucrat. This is

particularly evident in its support for the continuing bloodshed in Syria.

Kipping and her deputy, Jan Van Aken, signed a statement in December entitled “Syria: Freedom needs assistance”, calling for intervention in Syria. Other signatories include Andrea Nahles (SPD general secretary), Claudia Roth (national chair of the Greens) and Ruprecht Polenz (CDU, head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the federal parliament).

In January, an “internal reform paper” drawn up by Kipping and Riexinger came to light. Titled “Power Perspective for a Left-wing Alliance in the Federal Government”, the document advocated “solid cooperation” with the SPD and the Greens. At the time, media reports about the paper stressed that the Left Party no longer placed any conditions on its entry into a coalition at the federal level.

Previously, the Left Party had always officially based cooperation with the SPD and the Greens on a number of preconditions: no military operations abroad, the banning of arms exports, a €1,000 minimum income for all, and increased taxation of wealth. In their reform paper, Kipping and Riexinger say these conditions had become redundant, because the SPD and Greens had at least partially adopted many of the Left Party’s pivotal positions.

These arguments were repeated at the party congress, although the opposite is the case. The SPD and Greens have moved to the right on all major policy issues. In the federal parliament, they have supported the Merkel government in its European policies, as well as its military operations in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa.

They are directly responsible for the brutal austerity measures that have inflicted poverty and misery on large sections of the Greek, Portuguese and Spanish populations, as well as the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent victims in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria.

The Left Party is rushing to assist the SPD and the Greens because these policies are sparking increasing opposition from the German people.



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