

German Marx 21 group advocates military intervention in Syria

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For the last two weeks, the web site of the Marx 21 group—an integral component of the Left Party—has featured an article entitled “Putin’s pupils”. Its purpose is to mobilise support for an imperialist intervention in Syria to remove President Bashar al-Assad.

The article exemplifies the reactionary role of such pseudo-left organisations, which justify the imperialist rape of Syria under the cynical cover of the fight for human rights. Marx 21 is deliberately spreading lies about the war in Syria and the role of imperialism. The group serves as a propaganda organ for the imperialist powers’ efforts to re-colonise the Middle East.

Stefan Ziefle, the article’s author and the spokesman for the Left Party’s Federal Association for Peace and International Policy, sheds a few crocodile tears at the beginning of the article for the suffering of the Syrian people—for which he holds President Assad, who is in turn supported by Russia, fully responsible.

Ziefle writes: “The Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has been tutored by Vladimir Putin. In the fight against the secessionist movement in Chechnya a few years earlier, the Russian president was prepared to destroy the country. We recall that his army razed to the ground the provincial capital, Grozny, with its 250,000 inhabitants.”

He added: “Driving through Syrian towns from which the Syrian army has had to retreat, one is now reminded of the pictures of Grozny: whole neighbourhoods left without a single building intact, entire streets destroyed. To avoid any misunderstanding, this is not the work of ‘rebellious terrorists’ as the state broadcaster claims. It is unmistakably the work of massive bombing with weapons only Assad’s army possesses.”

Ziefle is utilising a well-worn ruse of the war propagandist. Syria is engulfed by a sectarian civil war that has been encouraged by the imperialist powers for more than two years. However, instead of analysing the various social and political interests that stand behind the war, and investigating their history, Ziefle limits himself to the (false) claim that the violence stems solely from one side—namely, the Assad regime.

In this way, imperialist regimes can justify almost any war crime, by claiming that violence is coming from the opponent. As Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, he justified this by saying that Polish soldiers were the attackers, and all Germany was now doing was “firing back”.

Ziefle’s claim that the violence in Syria is the sole responsibility of the Assad regime is clearly refuted by the facts. Islamist militias armed to the teeth by the imperialist powers and their regional allies—such as the Al Qaeda-linked Al Nusra Front—are committing terrible crimes against the Syrian people.

Only recently, a UN report revealed that “armed anti-government groups are committing war crimes, murders, executions and passing sentence without due process; carrying out torture, hostage-taking and looting”. Numerous YouTube videos depict mass executions or beheadings of political opponents and followers of other faiths by the pro-Western opposition militias.

Marx 21 published their article at a time when the US and its European allies are expanding support for extremist Sunni militias and are preparing for direct military intervention in Syria. The imperialist powers’ goal is to install a pro-Western puppet government in Damascus, to eliminate the Shiite Hezbollah in Lebanon and prepare for military confrontation with Iran and its close ally, Russia.

At the G8 summit at the beginning of the week, Washington and its European allies stepped up pressure on Russia to drop Assad and accept regime change in Syria. Before the meeting, the US spread lies about Assad’s alleged use of chemical weapons, and announced that they would directly supply arms to the largely Sunni Islamist opposition.

At the same time, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published an editorial by its lead foreign policy commentator, Stefan Kornelius, which openly named the real aims of the war preparations.

Kornelius accuses Russia of again playing the role of “world power” in the Syria war, and of being “as influential as ever in the Middle East”. Then he declares, “The US cannot stand idly by and watch these machinations, if it wants to maintain its claim to be a force for order. Its weaknesses are being exploited. These weaknesses are being studied by the Iranian regime, which is nuclear-hungry, defends its influence in the region, and fears for its existence. If Damascus falls, then Tehran will be the next to fall.”

Marx 21 helps mobilise support among disoriented middle class layers for a further bloodbath in the Middle East by poisoning public opinion. Ziefle is an advisor to Christine Buchholz, who has sat in the Parliamentary Defence Committee for the Left Party since 2007. As such, she is not only well informed about German imperialism’s strategic military plans, but also plays an active part in elaborating them.

To cover up for such war plans, Ziefle stands facts on their head. For example, he claims that “criticism of Assad has become quieter” among the Western elites. Even the last head of Germany’s secret service was “now clear that ‘regime change’ at the hands of the rebels would not lead to a pro-Western puppet regime. The democratic organs of the revolution were too strong. The rejection of Western politics in the region is too widespread, the West’s support for Israel, its invasion of Iraq, its tradition of maintaining amenable dictators. Any government in Syria would be pro-Palestinian and anti-imperialist.”

The claim that the sectarian war in Syria is a revolution directed against the aims of the West is clearly absurd.

It is almost embarrassing to have to explain that the brutal slaughter in Syria has nothing to do with revolution. A revolution is a progressive social process in the course of which broad layers of the population intervene into political events and develop programs for the radical transformation of property relations and a democratic re-constitution of society.

In this it is clear that the struggle for a democratic and egalitarian society in Syria demands the overthrow of the repressive bourgeois regime of Assad. However, it is an elementary principle of socialist

politics that only the independent revolutionary movement of the working class can wage the struggle for democracy and socialism, not the imperialist powers or their representatives.

For good reason, Ziefle says not a single word about the political program and social forces and interests behind the so-called “revolution” in Syria. If he were to do this, he would be forced to explain the miraculous transformation of the most reactionary political forces on the planet—US imperialism and its allies in the semi-feudal Gulf monarchies—into champions of democracy.

In reality, Washington, Riyadh and Doha support the Syrian opposition, because this corresponds to their own reactionary political goals and has nothing at all to do with progressive politics, let alone a socialist revolution.

Not only the Al Nusra Front but also the Local Coordination Committees (LCC) praised by Ziefle are part of a dirty imperialist operation. They are members of the National Syrian Coalition, dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, and recognised by the imperialist powers and their allies as the “legitimate representatives of the Syrian people”.

Like the entire Syrian opposition, the LCCs are directly financed by the US government and function politically as its representative. The LCCs receive money and training from, among others, the so-called Office for Syrian Revolution Support, established by the foreign ministers of the US and Britain, and headquartered in Istanbul.

Rami Nakhle, one of the chairs of the LCC, has long been one of the most aggressive advocates of military intervention in Syria. At a meeting of the Syrian Convention in Washington in April last year, he made a direct appeal to President Barack Obama: “You have the responsibility of protecting our people, and so far you have failed... Why are you waiting to intervene?”

Ziefle does not say how a US-financed group of mercenaries could keep a “pro-Western puppet regime” from coming to power in Syria. In reality, the imperialist powers created and financed the groups that serve them, like the LCCs, in order to install a regime in Syria that defends their strategic and economic interests. The LCCs are not seeking to bring down Assad through a revolutionary movement of the Syrian working class and replace his regime with a workers’ government.

Rather, they hope that Washington can bomb its way into a situation where they can be installed in power, and Syria’s riches handed over to the imperialists.

Due to their collaboration with the imperialist powers, the Syrian opposition enjoys hardly any popular support. Assad’s authoritarian regime is unpopular, but the lackeys of the West in the Syrian opposition are even more hated. That Ziefle nevertheless celebrates the LCCs as rank-and-file organs of a supposed revolution makes clear the class interests represented by Marx 21 and the Left Party.

Ziefle’s reference to the “dislike for Western politics in the region” shows he is conscious of the anti-imperialist sentiments in the Syrian population. In order to provide a left-wing cover to the re-colonisation of Syria, however, he employs the most abstruse distortions.

For example, he claims that a victory for the insurgency in Syria would “give courage to all the discontented in Qatar, in Saudi Arabia or Yemen to try again themselves. If the revolution were violently crushed, then resignation would lay like a leaden carpet over the entire region. The message to everyone else would be: If you try this, things will go the same way for you. You will be massacred and your towns will be destroyed. The weapons for this have already been delivered to the corresponding states by the West, above all the German government.”

Here too, Ziefle is clearly counting on his readers not examining the glaring contradictions in his arguments.

It is generally known that the reactionary monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar are arming the Syrian opposition and smuggling Islamic terrorists into Syria. The same regimes play a leading role in the

oppression of the working class in the region. For example, they helped the Emir of Bahrain violently defeat mass protests by the Shiite majority. In Egypt and Tunisia, they are financing the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist groups to block revolutionary mass struggles of workers and youth. They would not finance the Syrian opposition if its victory would lead to a progressive development in the Middle East.

The attempt by Marx 21 to distance itself from the German government is empty demagoguery. Berlin is working in Syria with the same forces as Marx 21. LCC representatives are part of The Day After Project, initiated by Washington and Berlin, which is elaborating plans for the re-organisation of Syria along free market lines following the violent overthrow of Assad.

Like Marx 21, the German government also advocates imperialist aggression under the cover of “human rights”. Berlin has stationed Patriot missile batteries on Turkey’s border with Syria, and is exporting tanks and other munitions to the Gulf monarchies to strengthen them against Iran. Marx 21 and the Left Party function in Syria as the cat’s paw of the German foreign ministry, supporting the same reactionary interests as the government in Berlin.

Marx 21 is one of a number of ex-radical, petty-bourgeois organisations—such as France’s New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain and the American International Socialist Organisation (ISO)—which have all turned sharply to the right in relation to Syria, moving lock, stock and barrel into the camp of imperialism.

At the conclusion of his article, Ziefle claims that Assad has been able “to improve his military situation in the civil war thanks to foreign support”. For this reason, he dismissed even the possibility of negotiations as making “no sense.” By rejecting even the possibility of negotiations, Ziefle advocates NATO war policies even more aggressively than the German government itself. Both Ziefle and Marx 21 glorify the death squads in Syria as revolutionaries, and advocate intensifying the war as well as the violent overthrow of Assad.

Their hypocritical references to democracy and human rights cannot disguise the fact that they share responsibility for the worst crimes being committed against the Syrian people. They have blood on their hands.



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