

German election: Socialist Alternative group supports social cuts and militarism

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The class character of political tendencies and parties often comes sharply into focus during election campaigns. Last week, the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative (SAV), the German section of the Committee for a Workers' International allied to the Socialist Party in Britain, published its election manifesto, calling for a vote for the Left Party. The SAV operates as a faction inside the Left Party.

The SAV manifesto makes clear that it stands firmly on the side of the bourgeois state, not on the side of workers. By calling for a Left Party vote, the SAV is signalling that it is prepared to support the programme of the ruling elite—social counterrevolution, militarism and the dismantling of democratic rights—against the working class.

Just days before the release of the SAV election manifesto, the Left Party spoke out in favour of a coalition government under the leadership of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate for chancellor, Peer Steinbrück.

In an interview with *Bild am Sonntag*, the leader of the Left Party parliamentary faction, Gregor Gysi, said there was “much agreement” between the Left Party and the SPD on policy, and that collaboration between the two parties would not fail due to the Left Party. He offered his services as foreign minister in a possible future coalition government of the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party.

Gysi left it to former SPD interior minister Otto Schily to describe what could be expected from an SPD-Left Party coalition government. “Law and order are social democratic values”. Schily told *Der Spiegel*, leaving no doubt that the continuation of the social cuts and attacks on labour rights of the last SPD government under Gerhard Schröder would proceed against the working class, by force if necessary.

To conceal the reactionary content of their election manifesto, the SAV lies through its teeth. Flying in the face of political reality, the organisation attempts to give the impression that the Left Party is “different” from other bourgeois parties. The SAV wrote, “In contrast to the uniformity of the CDU-CSU-SPD-FDP-Greens, the Left Party lays claim to pursue politics in the interests of the colleagues in the factories, the unemployed and pensioners. It uses its positions in parliament to do this, and is part of the extra-parliamentary opposition”.

The SAV then provides “a couple examples” to supposedly reinforce their claims: “The Left Party parliamentary faction has rejected every bank rescue package. The anti-fascist blockades in Dresden were also successful thanks to the massive support of the Left Party. The Left Party has rejected every single foreign military mission—in contrast to the Greens, who like to present themselves as a party of peace”.

The SAV's attempts to present the Left Party as being opposed to social cuts and war is a farce. The Left Party differentiates itself from the other bourgeois parties in name only, and like them defends the interests of German imperialism.

The claim that the Left Party “rejected every bank rescue package” is simply false. In 2008, when its votes were necessary to pass the first rescue package of €480 billion, the Left Party voted for expedited proceedings in the Bundestag (parliament). Then, in the final vote, when the Left Party's support was no longer necessary, it voted against it to cover up its tracks.

In his speech before the vote, Gysi made his support for the bailout unmistakably clear. “It is undeniable that a rescue package is necessary. That it must be implemented rapidly is also undeniable. And to this end we have given our support”, he said.

The Left Party aggressively supports the measures taken by the European Union and the German government to recoup the billions handed over to the bank via brutal austerity measures and structural reforms. Just a few weeks ago, the Left Party's aging figurehead Oskar Lafontaine wrote on his website that "wages and social spending has grown too strongly in Southern Europe". He called for a "wages policy oriented towards productivity" and cuts in real wages of 20 to 30 percent.

Against this background, the SAV's claim that the Left Party strengthens the fight against fascism is politically criminal. In Greece, the Left Party works closely together with SYRIZA, which plays the central role in strangling opposition to EU austerity measures. They bear political responsibility for the growth of the fascist Golden Dawn, which is diverting social discontent into racist channels and regularly organises violent attacks on immigrants and political opponents in collaboration with police.

In Germany, the Left Party works closely with state security authorities, which are deeply implicated in far-right terrorist crimes. The racist murders carried out by the far-right National Socialist Underground took place under the very eyes of the secret service and other security agencies, which together had over one hundred informants inside the far-right scene. There are strong indications that the intelligence services were directly involved.

Nevertheless, the Left Party invited the president of the secret service, Hans Georg Maaben, to participate with it in a public discussion forum. (See: "Germany's Left Party closes ranks with German intelligence agencies").

The SAV's attempt to present the Left Party as an anti-war party is one more entry in their catalogue of lies. Like all the other parties in the Bundestag, it supports the imperialist war in Syria. Last December, leading Left Party figures, including federal chair Katja Kipping and deputy chair Jan Van Auken, together with politicians from the SPD, the Greens and CDU, co-signed an appeal titled "Syria needs support", calling for intervention in Syria. (See: "Germany's Left Party mobilizes for war against Syria").

The Left Party's right-wing, pro-state policies are so blatant that the SAV is forced to address the issue. It writes, "in the SPD-Left Party state government in

Brandenburg, job cuts and other worsening [of social conditions] were carried through with the blessing of the Left Party faction", adding: "In Berlin too, cuts were implemented under the SPD and Left Party".

To conceal their support for this programme, the SAV claims that the Left Party is "not a homogeneous party". There were those in the Left Party who "would like to be part of a federal government" and want to "orient more strongly towards parliament", and others who, like the SAV, were "for an anti-capitalist, combative Left Party".

The SAV adds, "Nothing speaks against participating in government when this rests on a mass movement and implements real improvements in the interests of the majority, and such a government has the goal of breaking with capitalism".

This statement makes clear the class orientation of the SAV and the affluent middle class layers for whom they speak. Despite its name, the SAV has nothing in common with any sort of political alternative or socialist politics. Instead, the organisation openly declares its readiness to join a bourgeois government. Its claim that a government in which the Left Party participates would "break with capitalism" and implement "improvements in the interests of the majority" merely serves to disarm workers politically and prevent them from building their own party—the Socialist Equality Party.

The SAV election manifesto comes as no surprise. Its members have operated inside the Left Party since 2008. What is new is their call to participate in government. From the standpoint of the ruling class, September's federal election will be the launch pad for harsher cuts in Germany and throughout Europe. The SAV, which has close links to the trade union bureaucracy, regards this as a chance to integrate itself more deeply into the bourgeois state. Its election manifesto is a declaration of its readiness to implement the planned attacks on the working class.



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