

Germany: All-party coalition supports Syria war

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The German government and the Social Democratic and Green opposition are supporting the war effort against Syria. However, in the midst of the campaign for the general election, they fear that being too open with their war propaganda could cost votes on election day, September 22.

In 2002, the impending war in Iraq decided the outcome of the German elections. During the campaign, the incumbent, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (Social Democratic Party, SPD), had argued against the war, while the then-opposition leader, Angela Merkel, advocated military intervention. Merkel went on to lose an election that had previously seemed to promise certain victory, and was only elected chancellor three years later.

As was the case with the war in Iraq, an overwhelming majority of the German population oppose a war against Syria. In an opinion poll conducted by the Forsa Institute, 69 percent opposed a military strike. Only 23 percent were in favour, and one third of these rejected any German participation.

The SPD and the Greens fear this widespread anti-war sentiment. Like the current government, if they win the election, they plan to work closely with the United States in Syria and in other arenas of war, as they have already done in Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. For this reason, they have agreed with the government to keep the theme of war out of the election campaign as far as possible. The chair of the Green Party, Claudia Roth, called it “dishonest to exploit the complex situation in Syria for the election campaign.”

On Monday, Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) openly supported the war plans of the US and Britain. In Syria, it was “extremely likely” a poison gas attack had occurred, her spokesman Steffen Seibert declared. “This must not

remain without consequences.”

In a telephone conversation with British prime minister David Cameron, Merkel agreed on a “hard response”, British news agency PA reported.

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle spoke in a similar fashion. He described the use of chemical weapons as a “crime against civilisation” and concluded: “If such an occurrence was confirmed, the world community must act. Then Germany will belong to those who support consequences.”

Merkel and Westerwelle have pushed aside any speculation they might abstain from involvement in the war as they did two years ago in Libya. At that time, Germany abstained in the UN Security Council together with Russia and China on a vote on a Libya resolution.

In leading political circles this is now regarded as a serious mistake. Representatives from all political camps have come to the conclusion that—at least at present—Germany’s imperialist interests are best served when they work closely with the United States.

Merkel’s challenger Peer Steinbrück (SPD) immediately announced his full agreement with Merkel. “The government says that such crimes against humanity as the poison gas attack must lead to consequences. I agree,” he said on Tuesday to the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*. “The West must show its moral values and political beliefs, and cannot remain silent regarding such a poison gas attack.”

Steinbrück also advocated a military strike without a UN mandate. If China and Russia use their veto in the UN, a NATO intervention should be discussed, he said.

The chair of the Greens, Claudia Roth, spoke in similar vein to Steinbrück. She described the alleged use of poison gas in Syria as a humanitarian crime, which “calls for sharp criticism and concrete

consequences”. Although she said it was “dangerous” that “everything is already coming down to the military”, she expressly did not exclude a military strike.

Other leading representatives of the Greens, such as parliamentary leader Jürgen Trittin, defence expert Omid Nouri and MP Hans-Christian Ströbele, expressed similar sentiments. Although they tied their consent to military action to a UN mandate, in fact the Greens had agreed to the Yugoslavia war in 1999 without such a mandate.

A special role in this grand coalition for war is played by the Left Party. Their positions do not differ fundamentally from those of the SPD and the Greens, with whom they are seeking to cooperate after the election. They have also played a key role in building the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition. Nevertheless, they behave in the election campaign as though they were an anti-war party.

They are trying to steer the widespread anti-war sentiment into harmless channels and prevent the emergence of a genuine anti-war movement that threatens the interests of the ruling class.

The world has changed dramatically since the war in Iraq a decade ago. The world economy has been gripped by deep crisis since 2008, social contradictions have intensified enormously, and in Egypt the working class emerged two years ago as a powerful political factor. That is why the established political parties are closing ranks and line up behind the Syrian war.

Their outrage over the alleged poison gas attacks is pure hypocrisy. They know that a military strike will result in the death of thousands, if not millions of victims. Even the conservative newspaper *Die Welt* warns against weakening Assad’s army too much, because this would encourage the al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamists who have “gained the upper hand among the rebels”.

“They are notorious for torture, executions and their desire to wipe out all non-Sunni minorities in Syria”, the paper concludes. “If these groups conquer the Mediterranean coast and the cities of Latakia and Tartus, the inevitable result will be a bloodbath with thousands of casualties.”

Bourgeois parties from right to “left” support the criminal war against Syria, because, as was the case in the last century, they have no other answer to the crisis

of the capitalist system than war and social counterrevolution. They will implement their attacks on the working class in Germany and throughout Europe with the same brutality with which they are preparing to unleash war in Syria.



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