

Germany: Left Party seeks to cover its tracks in the Syria war drive

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Against the background of an imminent military strike against Syria by the US and its European allies the Left Party in Germany is making a cynical attempt to portray itself as a party opposed to war. It seeks to cover up its own support for the imperialist offensive against Syria and thereby demobilise the massive popular anti-war sentiment.

The front page of the newspaper *Junge Welt*, which is affiliated to the Left Party, ran a banner headline Wednesday: “War against Syria: We say no”. The foreign policy spokesman of the Left Party, Wolfgang Gehrcke, issued a statement calling on the German government to “categorically” oppose an intervention in Syria. In a video the chairman of the Left Party, Bernd Riexinger, declared: “We are absolutely opposed to a military intervention by the West in Syria.”

The German media has played along and also presents the Left Party as an “anti-war party”. A careful analysis of the party’s statements and role in the Syrian events makes clear, however, that it is in fact an integral element in the imperialist offensive against Syria. The Left Party has no fundamental differences with all other bourgeois parties and like them has long supported the goal of overthrowing the Syrian government of President Bashar Al-Assad in favour of a pro-Western puppet regime.

Christine Buchholz, who represents the Left Party in the defence committee of the Bundestag, has formulated the party’s position most clearly, i.e., that despite its recent criticism of a military strike it has no fundamental opposition to an imperialist-led war and supports the central aim of Western aggression, the overthrow of the Assad regime.

In a statement released Wednesday on the web site of the Left Party, Buchholz complained that “the Assad regime could emerge politically strengthened from such a military attack” and adds, “A US-led attack from outside would assist the regime in denigrating whatever civil resistance exists and suppress it more effectively.”

Other leading Left Party politicians warn of “an inferno” in the region and emphasize the need for a “political solution”. At the same time they participate in the media propaganda campaign aimed at packaging a military strike under the guise of a “humanitarian intervention”.

The head of the Left Party in the Bundestag, Gregor Gysi, stated: “If there has been any use of chemical weapons it must be roundly condemned and those responsible must be tried in the Hague.” He added that “all nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction ... should be banned and destroyed.”

In a video message, party chair Katja Kipping added: “Millions of people in Syria are fleeing the bloody civil war.... These people need to be helped. What can help them is an immediate strict arms embargo; that is, medicine and food can and should cross the border, but not a

single weapon should cross the border to Syria, and the refugees need support.”

The call for Assad’s downfall and a “humanitarian intervention” at a time when Washington, Paris, London and Berlin are preparing a military strike underlines the role of the Left Party as a party of German imperialism. The situation in Syria, in particular, shows that the Left Party, in close cooperation with all other parties, is quite prepared to defend German economic and geo-strategic interests by military means.

The statements issued by the Left Party resemble the statements of the German government and leaders of the opposition social democrats and Greens, who also support war against Syria under the guise of seeking a “political solution”.

Earlier this week the government stressed that the alleged use of poison gas in Syria would “have consequences”. Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle declared that Germany was one of those countries that “regarded consequences as appropriate” should the use of such weapons be confirmed. On Wednesday, a spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that the civil war in Syria could only be terminated by a “comprehensive political solution”.

All references to a “political solution” on the part of the Left Party and the government are just window dressing. All leading German parties are deeply involved in the war offensive against Syria and politically and morally responsible for the destruction of the country and the suffering of millions of people. Late last year, with the support of the SPD and the Greens, the Merkel government deployed Patriot air defence systems in Turkey directed at Syria. The German navy patrols the coast of Syria with a surveillance vessel and provides data for the pro-Western rebels. In the event of a military strike the same ship will provide data on potential targets.

The Left Party is now trying to cover its tracks, but it played an especially important role in the organization and implementation of the imperialist offensive against Syria, in close collaboration with the other pro-war parties. Last December Left Party leaders joined ranks with leading representatives of the government and the opposition SPD and the Greens and jointly signed an appeal titled “Syria: Freedom needs assistance”, which demanded an intervention in Syria. (See “Germany’s Left Party mobilizes for war against Syria”) Among the first signatories of the appeal were Left Party chairperson Katja Kipping, the party’s deputy chairman Jan van Aken, SPD General Secretary Andrea Nahles, the Greens federal leader Claudia Roth, and Chairman of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee Ruprecht Polenz (Christian Democratic Union).

The real character of the Left Party in the Syria conflict is exposed in particular by its cooperation with the pro-Western Syrian

opposition. The Left Party acts as an extended arm of the German Foreign Ministry and uses its close contacts with the Syrian opposition to further the interests of German imperialism. It has repeatedly held conferences and discussions in recent months under the guise of a “peace initiative” and seeking a “political solution” in which it has provided a platform for the Syrian opposition to propagandise on behalf of arming Syrian rebels and in favour of a Western-led military intervention.

The layers of the Syrian opposition with which the Left Party cooperates most closely currently head the National Syrian Coalition (NSK), which is described by the imperialist powers and their regional allies as the “legitimate representative of Syria”. In early July there was a change of leadership in the coalition, which is now led by Ahmed Jarba. Jarba belongs to the opposition group led by Michel Kilo called “Michel Kilo’s Mass” (previously the Syrian Democratic Forum), which joined the NSK at the end of May. Kilo’s political career is shaped by his Stalinist roots, with the Left Party playing a key role in sponsoring this self-appointed Syrian “dissident” over the past two years.

Kilo spoke at a number of Left Party meetings last year, including some held by the Left Party’s Rosa Luxembourg Foundation. One meeting was titled “Another Syria is possible!” and a conference was held under the title “Syria: Is a political solution possible?” The Left Party also opened up its publications to Kilo. He is featured regularly in the Left Party papers *Neues Deutschland* and *Junge Welt*, and has contributed an essay to the most recent book on Syria by Wolfgang Gehrcke.

Anyone who wants to understand what lies behind the Orwellian references of the Left Party to a “political solution” should closely examine the policies of its two allies, Kilo and Jarba.

In an interview with the French daily *Le Parisien* on Thursday, Jarba called for a rapid military assault and increased support for the Free Syrian Army. Jarba said, “Assad’s regime has complete support from Russia, Hezbollah and Iran. We have nothing. Our allies have given us none of what we have asked for. We need real support”. He then added, “If there is intervention, the regime will not survive for long. What’s essential is to take a courageous decision ... We need our friends. They should not stop at just words.”

In an interview with *Al Jazeera* in mid-July Kilo had already described his “vision” for Syria. The first priority was the overthrow of those “who have destroyed Syria, which is only 150 people.” Then follows a phase stating it is necessary to drive out the roots of tyranny “in the hearts and minds” in the state and society. This must be done by a national unity movement in cooperation with the military, according to Kilo, because the army is “the cornerstone of the regime”. After several years, “three, five, or seven”, says Kilo, it will then be possible to proceed to the phase of a democratic regime.

In other words, Kilo advocates replacing the heads of the regime but leaving the military and security apparatus intact to establish a new dictatorship over the people.

To topple Assad, Kilo expressly favours working closely with Islamist terror groups, which represent the vast majority of the rebels and are funded and supported primarily by Saudi Arabia. According to a report in *France 24* Kilo declared last February that there had to be an end to “encouraging fears in extremists.” He continued, “I was in Syria and met there members of Jabhat al-Nusra and Liwaa Ahar Souria. These are brigades of free Syrian men, which you often refer to as fundamentalists. I am a Christian, and they have received and embraced me given me awards.”

Kilo’s defense of Jabhat al-Nusra, an Islamist terrorist group that belongs to Al Qaeda, throws light on the reactionary character of the Left Party. In order to defend the goals of German imperialism, it is prepared to cooperate with forces that support and cover up despicable crimes against the Syrian civilian population. The same right-wing terrorist fighters eager to embrace Kilo—for as long as they see a use for him—are responsible for terror attacks and mass executions of dissenters and political opponents in those areas of Syria where they are active.

In many respects Kilo and Jarba personify the extent of and the cynicism behind the imperialist rape of Syria, and expose the reactionary character of the Left Party. Contrary to the lies of the imperialist powers and their stooges, a direct military strike against Syria has nothing to do with defending human rights and peace. It is an imperialist intervention planned long in advance and employing right-wing terrorist forces with the aim of establishing a new dictatorship to serve the interests of international finance capital.

The readiness of people like Kilo and Jarba to work simultaneously with bloodthirsty terrorists and sections of the Assad regime is welcomed by imperialism in its own plans to establish a neo-colonial puppet regime. The high-ranking NSK member Adib Shishakly, a Syrian businessman with close ties to the United States and Saudi Arabia, declared after Jarba’s election: “A change was necessary. The old leadership of the coalition had failed ... Ahmad Jarba is willing to work with everybody.”

It is for the same reasons, one might add, that the Left Party is held in esteem by German imperialism. As a successor to the former East German Stalinist ruling party the Left Party has long-established links to the nominally secular Syrian opposition, which largely consists of former Stalinists, as well as with the Syrian regime itself, in which the two official Communist parties of Syria participate and provide ministers. Like its allies in Syria the Left party is ready to “work with everyone” and, one should add, “do everything” to enforce the geopolitical and economic interests of German imperialism.

Currently, it is fulfilling this task by posing as an anti-war party. The Left Party knows that there is no greater threat to German imperialism than an independent movement of the working class against war and capitalism based on an international socialist program. In order to prevent the impending war workers must turn to such a perspective. This requires above all comprehending that behind the hollow phrases of the Left Party lurks a policy that is openly articulated by its allies in the Syrian opposition, namely dictatorship and war.



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