

German Left Party promotes government propaganda against Russia

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Last Friday, the German Left Party's executive published a statement on the situation in Ukraine. Under the title "End Power Struggles: Halt the Danger of War," party co-chairs Katja Kipping and Bernd Riexinger declared, "We are following developments in Ukraine and Crimea with concern."

Their joint statement begins with the declaration: "We condemn the threatening military actions by the Russian Federation..." It continues: "The answer to the actions of the Russian Federation in Crimea, which are in violation of international law and which we condemn, must be diplomacy—war cannot solve any problems and should not be a policy option."

After some details about military developments, the statement asserts: "The war danger was increased still further by the mobilisation of Russian troops on the Ukrainian border." The authors go on to demand: "Russia has to abandon its course of confrontation."

This statement is clear and serves an important function. With it, the Left Party is indicating its essential agreement with the German government, seconding the government's insistence that Russia is the aggressor. While Left Party leader Gregor Gysi and other deputies pose in parliament as an opposition and issue critical comments, they repeatedly seek to reassure the government that they are a loyal opposition and are in agreement on fundamental questions of foreign policy.

The authors of the statement condemn not only threats of military action by Russia, but also those from the Ukrainian government and NATO, but this is merely window dressing for the purpose of covering their tracks.

Their claims that the Russian government's actions are in violation of international law and that the Kremlin is pursuing a course of confrontation turns

reality on its head and confuses cause with effect. It was not the Russian government that blackmailed Ukraine by giving it an ultimatum, but rather the European Union (EU) and the German chancellor's office.

Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the EU Commission, stated explicitly in February 2013 that Ukraine could not be a member of a customs union with Russia while concluding an Association Agreement with the EU. He said Ukraine had to decide which path it wanted to take. In other words, Brussels and Berlin demanded that Ukraine break off its economic relations with Russia and subordinate itself completely to the economic dictates of the EU and the International Monetary Fund.

When the Ukrainian government under Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign the Association Agreement, the United States, Germany and other EU states including Poland and Hungary organised and financed right-wing and fascist parties as well as extreme right-wing shock troops to carry out an overturn in Kiev and bring a government to power dominated by ultra-nationalists and fascists.

If this is not a violation of national sovereignty and a breach of international law, then what is? The American government has trampled on the national sovereignty of a large number of states and carried out wars of aggression in violation of international law to secure its preeminence as a global power.

There is no doubt that the most aggressive imperialist power, which repeatedly violates international laws and carries out criminal actions, is Washington. It pursues its goal of global hegemony in close collaboration with its European allies. While the Left Party in the past responded to imperialist aggression with pacifist phrases and appeals, they have now gone over to fully

supporting these policies.

This development may surprise some, but it has deep objective and historical causes. The current crisis in Ukraine and the threats of war against Russia are a direct consequence of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the reintroduction of capitalist exploitation in Eastern Europe.

Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the governments in Washington and Bonn undertook the destruction of Yugoslavia by splitting it into its ethnic component parts. This was part of a strategy to extend their influence over former East Bloc countries and ex-Soviet republics. The United States and Germany led wars in the mid-1990s in Bosnia and Croatia and bombarded Serbia for 78 days in 1999 to separate Kosovo from Serbia.

The former Warsaw Pact states—Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia—as well as Slovenia, Albania and Croatia and the ex-Soviet republics Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were integrated into NATO, one after the other, despite a pledge by the US secretary of state in 1990 not to advance “an inch” into the territory of the former Soviet Union.

With the establishment of a pro-Western puppet regime in Kiev, the noose is being tightened around Russia. Imperialism aims to impose regime-change in Moscow and bring pro-Western politicians such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky to power.

In this way, Russian energy resources and the markets of this massive country of 150 million people are to be brought under Western control. As in Ukraine, this is to be linked to a further assault on the living standards and social conditions of the working class.

The cadres of the Left Party were largely recruited from the Stalinist state party of the old German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and its successor organization, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). These parties supported the reintroduction of capitalist relations in East Germany, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

In the decisive months of transition, the PDS played a key role in organising the transfer of East German state property to the banks and business concerns of West Germany. Thus, the Left Party’s predecessor unflinchingly defended capitalism, and this class orientation has an inevitable logic.

The conflict over Ukraine marks a turning point in

global politics. The imperialist powers, Germany included, are cooperating with fascists and chancing the outbreak of a nuclear world war in order to impose their interests. Faced with this development, the Left Party has abandoned its pacifist phrases and positioned itself openly on the side of imperialist politics.

The rightward shift of the Left Party has not proceeded without internal conflicts. A faction of the party around the *Junge Welt* newspaper is close to the Russian government. It has reacted angrily to the actions of the United States and the EU. But there is nothing progressive about the response of this group.

The Russian government that it defends has reacted to the crisis by stoking up Russian chauvinism. It represents the interests of criminal oligarchs and is deeply hostile to the working class.

It is worth noting that the party’s deputy chairwoman, Sahra Wagenknecht, who likes to portray herself as the leader of the party’s left wing, has not taken a stance against the statement by the executive, of which she is a member. Instead, she gave an interview to television broadcaster N-TV in general agreement with the official party statement, but placing emphasis on the need for talks with Russia and greater recognition of Russian interests.

Germany had to return to “the foreign policy of Willy Brandt (Social Democratic chancellor in the 1970s) and Hans-Dietrich Genscher (long-time Free Democratic Party foreign minister),” she said, “instead of following the US toward confrontation.”

These conflicts within the Left Party are nothing more than the background noise to its rightward trajectory.



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