

Germany's Left Party emerges as a party of war

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One of the most significant political developments in Germany is the integration of the Left Party into the government's war drive.

As German President Gauck and the leadership of the coalition government announced the return of great power politics at the beginning of the year, the Left Party was already involved in this foreign policy shift.

The Left Party's representative on the Foreign Affairs Committee in parliament, Stefan Liebich, was among the 50 leading politicians, journalists, academics, and representatives from the military and business who produced the strategy paper, "New power, new responsibilities", under the guidance of the government-aligned Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs—SWP) and the Washington-based German Marshall Fund think tank.

Since then, the party has ever more openly supported the government's aggressive foreign policy. In April, several Left Party deputies voted for the first time in favour of a German army intervention in Syria in the name of disarmament and peace. Over the summer, Gregor Gysi became one of the first German politicians to call for supplying weapons to the Kurds, and he demanded a massive intervention of UN troops. Ulla Jelpke, spokesperson for the anti-capitalist left tendency, attacked the government from the right in an emergency session of parliament on the supply of German weapons to Iraq, saying, "We are actually calling for a lot more for Iraq and Syria than has been decided here."

Last week, fourteen leading Left Party politicians published a statement under the title "Save Kobani," which called for a major military intervention against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS). The signatories include twelve members of the party's parliamentary fraction, including the deputy chairman of the fraction, Dietmar Bartsch, Jan Korte, Vice-President of Parliament

Petra Pau, and of course Stefan Liebich.

Based on media reports of atrocities by ISIS, the Left Party beat the drum for war. They are using the plight of the Kurdish minority as a pretext for supporting a policy of imperialist war.

One of the Left Party's district organisations in Berlin collected signatures on a web site supporting the supply of weapons and military assistance to Kurdish groups in Iraq and Syria. It stated that "the war against IS" was only beginning, and there was thus far "no convincing scenario" of how the Jihadis could be pushed back and defeated without military violence and the assistance of the West.

It stated further, "We all know the role that the US and Britain have played in Iraq over the last ten years. But we recognise that in the concrete situation of the threat posed by IS, the US, Britain, France, and the other countries in the anti-IS coalition are doing something right: standing alongside the Kurds and the Iraqi population. ... [W]e also think it is right to fight IS from the air and on the ground."

Leaving no doubt that they support government policy, the Left Party authors of this "Appeal of the 200" write further, "For these reasons, we are of the opinion that it is correct that the CDU/SPD government has decided to supply weapons to the Kurds."

In the face of sustained opposition to the return of German militarism and great power politics within the population, the Left Party has assumed a very specific task. The Left Party is attempting to cover up the return of German militarism with phrases about peace, democracy and human rights, while suppressing all opposition. An important role in this is being played by pseudo-left tendencies like Marx21 and SAV. They are the most aggressive promoters of human rights imperialism. They supply the arguments with which the ruling elite cover up and ideologically legitimise their war policy,

An especially despicable and demagogic role is played by Christine Buchholz. A member of Marx21, she has sat for the Left Party over the past five years on the parliamentary defence committee, and is thus well informed about the war plans of German imperialism. In February, she flew together with Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen (CDU) in a German army aircraft to a region where the German army is deployed in Africa, later reporting excitedly about her discussions with military strategists and officers.

Last weekend, Buchholz published a statement calling for support for the Kurdish peoples' defence forces in the Syrian-Turkish border town of Kobani. She urged the German government to lift its ban on the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), and to support PKK resistance against IS.

At the same time, she criticised American air strikes as untargeted and counter-productive. She wrote, "The US bombardment has politically strengthened IS. This is because numerous Syrians, living in areas liberated from the Assad regime, feel threatened by them. This development threatens to destroy the remainder of the revolution which began in 2011 against the Assad regime."

In other words, Buchholz is demanding the continuation of the struggle against the Assad regime. She describes the fight of the imperialist proxy forces against the regime in Damascus as a "revolution", even though the Islamic State terror group that emerged from these forces was armed and financed by the US and its allies in the Gulf region.

Buchholz is thereby continuing the reactionary politics pursued by Marx21 and the Left Party in Syria over recent years. Two years ago, they played a decisive role in the building of the so-called "Syrian resistance" and the establishment of networks between various opposition groups. They supported and glorified the opposition alliance, Adopt a Revolution (AaR), and sought to conceal the pro-imperialist character of this movement.

But in reality, Adopt a Revolution served to back the Syrian opposition and, like the Syrian National Council and the National Coordinating Committee for Democratic Change (NCC), was closely connected to the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which backed a NATO intervention in Syria. This pro-imperialist opposition movement enabled the terrorist group Al Qaeda to spread its activities to Syria and establish the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The politics of the Left Party and Marx21 are responsible to a considerable degree for current developments and the terror of IS.

The current attempt to pursue imperialist interests in alliance with the Kurdish Workers Party is not a jot better. The Left Party is again seeking to portray the Kurdish resistance as a democratic people's movement. The fight of the PKK and the closely aligned Syrian-Kurdish People's Defence Force has "become a beacon for the oppressed of the entire region," Buchholz wrote.

What one is to make of this was made clear earlier this week by Volker Kauder, the chairman of the CDU fraction in parliament. This close confidante of Chancellor Merkel praised the willingness to fight of the PKK in a *Spiegel* interview, and suggested that supplying German weapons to PKK fighters should be considered.

While the German government is seeking ways to strengthen its influence in Syria and the Middle East, the Left Party functions as a political trailblazer, concealing the imperialist interests behind a barrage of pseudo-democratic phrases about people's liberation and national self-determination.

The formation of mini-states on an ethnic basis has nothing to do with "people's liberation," but would lead to the Balkanisation of the Middle East and allow the imperialist powers to play off the various national groups against each other to intensify the exploitation of the region.

The interests of the population cannot be represented and realised on a nationalist basis, by division and so-called independence. Precisely in a region like the Middle East, where numerous ethnic and religious groups live closely together, such policies lead inevitably to massacres and ethnic cleansing. Instead of national division, the unification of the working class on the basis of an internationalist and socialist programme is necessary.



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