

# German Left Party backs Merkel on Ukraine crisis

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The Left Party has responded to the Ukraine crisis and the growing danger of a war with Russia by backing the policy of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Party Chairman Berndt Riexinger opened a press conference Monday by stating, “We explicitly welcome the diplomatic efforts of Chancellor Merkel and French President Hollande.”

One might have mistaken him for the chancellor’s official spokesman when he repeated Merkel’s statement that there was no alternative to negotiations. Everything had to be done to reach an acceptable solution through negotiations, he insisted.

“We welcome the clear statement on supplying weapons by the chancellor,” Riexinger continued, adding, “Merkel correctly pointed out that the Ukrainian conflict cannot be resolved militarily.”

Riexinger presented four demands: no arms to Ukraine, a ceasefire between Ukrainian government troops and the rebels in the east, more autonomy for the regions in Ukraine, and a greater involvement of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe).

Making clear that the Left Party’s demands are fully within the framework of official German government policy, Riexinger emphasised that the demand for no military supplies to Ukraine was not limited to one side. “The supply of arms by Russia to the separatists must also be halted. I emphasise that explicitly,” he said.

Riexinger’s attempt to present the German government’s opposition to the dispatch of arms to Ukraine by the US as a peace policy is a grotesque falsification of the facts.

Along with the US, the German government is chiefly responsible for the current crisis, which

threatens to escalate into a war, possibly employing nuclear weapons, between the NATO powers and Russia.

Berlin was the driving force behind the Association Agreement to integrate Ukraine economically and strategically in to the sphere of influence of the European Union (EU) and NATO, even though Ukraine had been part of Russia and later the Soviet Union since the 17th century. When then-President Viktor Yanukovich opposed the signing of the agreement, the German government helped organise a coup that brought a pro-Western regime to power with the backing of fascist forces. That this provoked a reaction from Moscow and the population in eastern Ukraine, which has close links to Russia, was entirely predictable.

Since then, Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier have promoted the military encirclement of Russia in cooperation with the United States. They have imposed economic sanctions and supported the strengthening of NATO forces along the Russian border. The spearhead of a new rapid deployment force to enable NATO to mobilise tens of thousands of soldiers against Russia within a few days will be led this year by the German army.

However, Merkel and Steinmeier had not anticipated that the US would deliberately work toward a military confrontation. Washington is aiming to involve Ukraine in a long and expensive war, as spelled out by former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.

During the administration of Democratic President Jimmy Carter, Brzezinski developed the same policy for Afghanistan, where the Americans armed Islamic fundamentalists in a proxy war against the Soviet Union.

The private security web site Stratfor, which has close

ties to American intelligence, wrote: “There is a contradiction inherent in German strategy... In Ukraine, Germany was an early supporter of the demonstrations that gave rise to the current government. I don’t think the Germans expected the Russian or US responses, and they do not want to partake in any military reaction to Russia. At the same time, Germany does not want to back away from support for the government in Ukraine.”

Germany’s reluctance to supply the Kiev regime with weapons, which would plunge Ukraine into a drawn out war with countless victims and have a negative impact on Germany, does not mean that it is a peaceful power. Merkel has left no doubt that she supports an intensification of sanctions against Russia and will continue to align with Washington in escalating the conflict.

To the extent that there are voices in the German ruling elite calling for more distance from Washington, they are doing so in order to strengthen Germany militarily and turn it once again into an aggressive great power.

This aim was announced when German President Gauck, Foreign Minister Steinmeier and Defence Minister Von der Leyen proclaimed a year ago that Germany had to play a role “in Europe and the world” that corresponded to its size and influence, and that “in a world full of crises and unrest” Germany required an active and militarist foreign policy. The coup in Ukraine was the practical implementation of this policy.

With the emergence of tensions between Berlin and Washington, the Left Party has given up even its purely formal distance from the policies of German imperialism. That is the real significance of Riexinger’s words of praise for Merkel and Germany’s actions in Ukraine.

The Left Party’s representatives now move among imperialist politicians and military brass like fish in water. Four of their parliamentary deputies participated in the recent Munich Security Conference to exchange views with high-ranking politicians and military officials. Wolfgang Gehrcke, Left Party representative on the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, has noted at every opportunity that he is well connected in all areas, including the military and intelligence agencies.

Amid the growth in transatlantic tensions, the Left Party is positioning itself as a defender of German imperialism. The Left Party is the only party in the German parliament whose predecessors stood on the other side of the Iron Curtain during the years of the Cold War. Now they connect their critique of NATO and America’s war policy with support for the return of German great power politics.

This is the meaning of comments by former party chairman Oscar Lafontaine at the beginning of the year. At the Rosa Luxemburg conference of the *Junge Welt* newspaper, he said that as long as Germany was a NATO member and NATO’s infrastructure was dominated by America, Germany did not constitute a genuine sovereign state. The “vassalage” and “obligation to contribute” connected with NATO membership had to be overcome, he declared.

Lafontaine continued: “Germany has practically participated in every war led by the United States of America because all of the wars they have led have relied on US facilities in central Europe. We were in every case a participant. And as long as that is the case, we are not a sovereign country.”

The demand for German sovereignty is a key demand of right-wing circles. It makes clear that the Left Party’s criticisms of American military policy are based on a German nationalist standpoint.



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