Germany's Left Party presents right-wing draft programme for federal election

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18 January 2017

Every year on January 15 a disgusting spectacle takes place in Berlin that one can describe only as a political desecration. On the anniversary of the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht on January 15, 1919, leading members of the Left Party make a pilgrimage to the graves of the great socialists at the Lichtenberg Cemetery in east Berlin. In parallel with this, the Left Party-aligned *Junge Welt* newspaper, together with several Stalinist organisations such as the German Communist Party (DKP), organise the Rosa Luxemburg conference.

The spectacle serves the purpose for the Left Party and their pseudo-left hangers-on of providing their right-wing politics with a "left" and even socialist cover as they prepare an even further shift to the right. This was particularly clear this year.

Just a few hours after Katja Kipping, Bernd Riexinger, Sahra Wagenknecht and Dietmar Bartsch laid a wreath at the grave of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, they presented the Left Party's first draft programme for the federal election in September.

The central aim animating the draft programme is to place the Left Party in a position to assume governmental responsibility at the federal level in coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens, two parties of social welfare cuts and war. At a joint press conference of the party leadership, Bartsch pointed out that "we already have a majority in the Bundestag (federal parliament) outside of the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union)." He noted that he had proposed several weeks ago to "elect an SPD chancellor and carry out different policies."

His main concern, he said, was to "restore predictability." Europe was "certainly in the worst crisis there has ever been." The financial crisis was "not overcome." Brexit was a reality. There was "a strengthening of right-wing extremist parties," and youth unemployment in the southern countries was hovering around 50 percent. Therefore, there was a need for "a shift in policy in Europe's central industrial power, in Germany." He concluded, "That is what we are advocating with our proposals."

To sum up: Under conditions of the deepest capitalist crisis since the end of the Second World War and mounting economic and political instability in Europe, the Left Party stands ready to stabilise German capitalism domestically and position it to challenge its rivals abroad.

The draft programme warns: "Many people are worried and insecure due to war and terrorism, and a threatened military confrontation between the NATO states or the United States and Russia. Free trade and direct investment, competition for ever scarcer resources and the consequences of the climate catastrophe are leading to uprisings, military conflicts and people fleeing across continents."

It states further: "Germany is one of the richest countries in the world and has power and influence over these developments. In the German Army's White Paper, the claim to actively participate in shaping the world order is raised, including militarily, against the background of the 'economic, political and military significance' of Germany."

Nobody should allow himself to be deceived by the pacifist phrases found at certain points in the draft programme. The role of the Left Party in a Red-Red-Green federal government would be to cover up the return of German militarism to the global stage with "humanitarian" rhetoric and help impose such a policy in the face of popular opposition. To this end, the draft programme states: "When the government speaks of

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‘German responsibility in the world,’ we say: that must be responsibility for disarmament and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.”

The Left Party’s call for global “German responsibility” goes hand in hand with support for a major strengthening of the security apparatus. In the section titled “Citizen-responsive police,” the Left Party asserts: “Many people desire more security and a police easier to reach. Thousands of positions in the police have fallen victim to public spending cuts. Central units of the federal police, which cannot be reached by citizens, have at the same time been strengthened. We want to overcome a shortage in personnel.”

The programme also calls for widespread surveillance of public spaces and political censorship of the Internet. It states: “In public spaces, we want to protect the security of citizens with more personnel. On social networks, as in public places in general, we must implement protections against verbal attacks, agitation and character assassination.”

The phrases in the section titled “The future for which we fight: social justice for all” are not worth the paper they are written on. Bartsch stated reassuringly that the main reason there was consensus in the party on a 75 percent tax on income over €1 million was that the measure was not an attack on all forms of wealth. In Germany, it would, “according to the last count, affect some 16,000 people,” and it included “exemptions.”

Such mildly “left” rhetoric is too much for some in the party. Former parliamentary group leader Gregor Gysi called on the party to moderate such statements. He told Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland, “I know these tax fairytales. They were also told by French President François Hollande and he failed. It appears radical but results in nothing.”

Gysi’s opposition to any measure that seriously threatens the income and wealth of the millionaires and billionaires underscores the right-wing, anti-working class character of the Left Party. So do Sahra Wagenknecht’s outbursts against refugees. At the press conference to present the programme, she unashamedly defended herself when asked about her notorious interview with *Der Stern* .

In it, she accused German Chancellor Angela Merkel of bearing “joint responsibility” for last month’s terrorist attack at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin. “There is a joint responsibility, but it is many-sided,” Wagenknecht stated. “Along with the uncontrolled opening of the borders, there is the police being cut to the breaking point, so that it has neither the personnel nor the equipment needed for such a dangerous situation.”

Wagenknecht’s call for a vast expansion of police powers, her agitation against refugees and her attack on the Merkel government from the right are so similar to the propaganda slogans of the far-right Alternative for Germany that its chairwoman, Frauke Petry, remarked in a recent interview with *Focus*, “There are points of agreement with Mrs. Wagenknecht. Certainly not on all points, but on some. She has, for example, signaled her support for the national state on the basis of a rational analysis that I fully share. And that the euro damages Europe, which Mrs. Wagenknecht believes, is what the AfD has said since 2013. Yes, I am happy about these points of agreement.”

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