

German Left Party joins right-wing campaign against Turkey

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The conflict between the Turkish government and European governments has escalated in the past few days. In an unprecedented diplomatic affront, the Dutch government denied the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Cavusoglu entry to the country last weekend. The Turkish Family Minister Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya was then escorted back across the border to Germany by armed police units.

Both ministers had planned to address Turkish residents in the Turkish consulate in Rotterdam about the upcoming constitutional referendum. Following the ban on both politicians, the Dutch police used water cannons and batons to disperse a protest demonstration in front of the Turkish consulate.

In Germany the Left Party responded immediately, heartily welcoming these undemocratic measures. Left Party leader Sahra Wagenknecht called on the German government to learn from the “firm approach” of the Dutch government.

On Saturday, she wrote on Twitter: “In the Netherlands the Turkish Foreign Minister has been refused permission to land in the country for a planned election campaign, but so far, here in Germany, we have been waiting in vain for Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Gabriel to show as much backbone. My proposal: combined pressure for a ban on all appearances.”

In a Monday morning post on the Facebook page of the Left Party parliamentary faction, she wrote: “Austria and the Netherlands have decided they will not allow Erdogan’s propaganda tour for dictatorship and the death penalty to take place on their territory. The determination to implement this decision could be witnessed yesterday in the Netherlands: the Turkish Foreign Minister did not receive landing permission for a planned election campaign! Unfortunately, the

German government is still far removed from such a clear stance”.

The Left Party then proceeded to welcome the decision of the Federal Constitutional Court, which on Friday had “fortunately” provided legal backing for a ban on any appearances in Germany by Erdogan and his entourage. The court acknowledged that such a ban was a foreign policy decision, which the federal government could easily take. “With this, Merkel and Gabriel can no longer hide behind some spurious excuses”, concluded the Left Party.

The former head of the Left Party parliamentary faction, Gregor Gysi, also warned against “continuing to obey or cuddle up to the Turkish despots”. Instead, Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Gabriel “would finally have to bring the Turkish regime and its campaign for dictatorship and the death penalty into line.” According to Gysi: “We cannot allow ourselves to be blackmailed on a daily basis by Turkey because of the refugee issue.”

The utterly reactionary consequences of the demand for a ban on appearances and speeches by Turkish politicians is shown by recent events in Holland. Just one day before parliamentary elections on Wednesday, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, a right-wing neo-liberal, is striving to whip up anti-Kurdish and anti-Muslim sentiments and outdo the right-wing extremist Geert Wilders, who was close to his heels in the pre-election polls.

Newspaper reports on the Dutch election make clear that Wilders is calling the shots in the campaign--with Rutte now seeking to outdo his main rival from the right. Prior to the latest ban, Wilders had accused Rutte of being “too weak” to prevent the appearance of Turkish politicians in the Netherlands.

Rather than posing any sort of defence of democracy

and freedom of expression in Turkey, the Dutch ban on appearances by Turkish politicians serves to completely undermine democratic rights in the Netherlands. Rutte deliberately provoked the Turkish government in order to divert attention from the extreme social tensions in his country and to whip up racism. For his part, Turkey's President Erdogan is using the Dutch offensive to whip up nationalist sentiments in Turkey and advance his own campaign for an authoritarian presidential system.

The fact that the Left Party now welcomes Rutte's approach and praises it as a role model speaks volumes about the right-wing character of the party. It has long supported budget cuts and cuts to social gains and jobs, wherever it has assumed governmental responsibility. One example is the Berlin Senate led by former Mayor Klaus Wowereit (SPD). For 10 years, Wowereit ruled in a coalition with the Left Party, which became notorious for a ruthless policy of cuts.

However, with its support for a racist campaign, which is uniformly praised by the Christian Social Union, the far right the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Wilders' own PVV, the right-wing policy of the Left Party assumes a new quality. It thereby strengthens right-wing parties across Europe and clearly emerges as a xenophobic party of "law-and-order".

Declaring "Whoever abuses the laws of the host country has forfeited the right of hospitality," Sahra Wagenknecht had already lined up with the right-wing campaign against refugees and demands for an authoritarian state. At the time, she was praised by the AfD. "Ms. Wagenknecht has summed up the situation very well," responded AfD deputy chairman Alexander Gauland who repeated Wagenknecht's demand: "Anyone who comes to us voluntarily has to behave as a guest or leave Germany."

Today the right-wing extremist and opponent of the EU Geert Wilders can also register his approval when Wagenknecht celebrates the expulsion of Turkish politicians as a role model for the German government. The right wing of the CSU is also thrilled. When its foreign and security policy spokesman, Florian Hahn, demanded the withdrawal of the Bundeswehr from the Turkish military base of Incirlik in the *Bild am Sonntag*, Wagenknecht proclaimed her support: "In view of current developments in Turkey it is time to withdraw the Tornados and Bundeswehr soldiers from

Incirlik and immediately stop arms deliveries to Turkey."

The Left Party's backing for the policy of the extreme right results from the bourgeois character of the party. Like all other bourgeois parties, it reacts to growing social divisions and tensions by moving to the right.

The rise of Trump in the US with his policy of "America first!" has accelerated this development. The German government has responded with a program of rapid military rearmament. This development is driven by the insoluble crisis of world capitalism. The ruling classes in every country respond to growing social and economic tensions with a fierce struggle for the global redistribution of economic and political power.

As in the thirties, the flare-up of militarism is linked to the spread of racist poison. At that time, anti-Semitism served to incite backward social strata; today anti-Islamism plays a similar role. The right-wing shift of the Left Party is an integral part of this reactionary development.



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