

Left Party leader supports Germany's great power interests

Johannes Stern
2 August 2017

The class character of political parties is most clearly revealed in the sphere of foreign policy. From this standpoint the political gulf between the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) and the Left Party could not be greater.

The SGP is the only party participating in the German federal election on the basis of a socialist program calling for the unity of the international working class against militarism and war, while the Left Party staunchly defends the interests of German capitalism against its international rivals.

The fierce conflicts between Berlin and Brussels on the one hand and Berlin and Washington on the other, arising from the new US sanctions against Russia, have thrust aside the scanty pacifist fig leaf of the Left Party, which is currently accusing every other party of not defending European and German interests aggressively enough.

On his Facebook page, the former SPD chairman and founding father of the Left Party, Oskar Lafontaine, issued the following demand: "It is time for Europe to take its own interests seriously and abandon more or less unconditional loyalty to the US. The conspicuous attempt by the US Congress to ban Europe from obtaining Russian gas and force Europeans to buy liquid gas from the US is yet another testament to the arbitrariness of US policy."

In order to reinforce his demand for a more aggressive German great power policy, Lafontaine asks: "But who is to take the lead in opposing such ruthless pursuit of interests in Europe? The patron of corporative tax evasion, Juncker? The investment banker Macron? Or the well-behaved former FDJ (former East German Stalinist youth organisation) secretary for agitation and propaganda Merkel, who has supported every turn in US policy up to now? "

According to Lafontaine, the response of the Social Democratic lead election candidate, Martin Schulz, who, together with Juncker, Macron and Merkel, has sharply criticised the US sanctions and threatened the US with trade war, does not go far enough. Lafontaine writes: "The Bundestag election could be exciting if the well-behaved servant of US interests faced a candidate in the shape of Martin Schulz prepared to show a red card to the US's ruthless policy."

Unfortunately, however, he continues, it is only the Left Party, which "despite all its mistakes, is the only party that does not tamely swim in the wake of the only remaining world power." Only "a strong Left in the Bundestag can oppose any conceivable coalition of the neoliberal parties ... and again and again insist that the interests of Germany and Europe be better represented against the unfair goals of US politics."

The reactionary thrust of Lafontaine's criticism is clear. He is seeking to transform widespread opposition to US militarism into support for German and European imperialism.

"US oligarch capitalism" is "particularly brazen," Lafontaine writes. After all, "the United States has by far the largest military budget in the world (over 600 billion dollars) and has overrun the globe with more than 800 military bases." President Eisenhower had already warned against "the US military-industrial complex" and foresaw the danger "that the arms industry and big business would determine US policy".

There can certainly be no doubts regarding the reactionary character of American imperialism. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union it jettisoned any remaining inhibitions and has sought to compensate for its economic decline with a string of vicious wars that have resulted in millions of dead. In the figure of Donald Trump, a fascist millionaire has

moved into the White House—a man who embodies all the brutality and criminality of the US ruling class.

But what about German capitalism, whose interests Lafontaine is so keen to defend against America? It is by no means better. Seven decades after the defeat of the Nazi regime, it is once again showing its true face. It has reacted to growing international tensions as it did prior to the First and Second World Wars: by rearming, claiming its role as Europe's hegemon and expanding its geostrategic and economic interests by military means all over the world.

As is the case in the US, Germany's banks, big corporations, intelligence services, military forces and a small group of super-rich determine the politics of all parties. This is why their programs hardly differ from each other. At the same time, the majority of the population struggles to make ends meet. Forty percent of all workers are employed in precarious jobs, and 16 percent of the population live below the poverty level.

Lafontaine and his party are part of this policy. Wherever the Left Party assumes power, it implements austerity as ruthlessly as all the other parties and organises social devastation in partnership with the SPD and Greens. On foreign policy, they reject the slogan of the revolutionary, Karl Liebknecht, "The main enemy is at home", in favour of "the main enemy is the USA".

As tensions between Germany and the US grow, Lafontaine has become increasingly aggressive. Already in June 2015 he wrote on his Facebook page: "The US minister for war calls on Europeans to confront Russian 'aggression'. The Europeans have every reason to oppose US aggression. We need a European foreign policy that will contain US imperialism. Fuck US imperialism!"

Lafontaine's "European foreign policy" explicitly includes military force. On his Facebook site at the end of May, he described former French head of state General de Gaulle—an authoritarian militarist and right-wing nationalist—as a role model: "For years, the Left Party has been calling for an independent European foreign policy. It is a long time since Charles de Gaulle realised that France itself must decide whether or not to participate in a war. That is why he did not integrate the French army into the military structure of NATO, i.e. the US."

In earlier Bundestag elections, the Left Party was able

to deceive some workers and youth with pacifist phrases. Now it is necessary, however, to settle political accounts. Lafontaine's statements clearly show that the Left Party—either as a party of government or in opposition—will enthusiastically cheer on when Bundeswehr soldiers take to the battlefield to defend "German interests".

Lafontaine's "pacifism", which began with his support for demonstrations against the deployment of American Pershing II missiles in the early 1980s, was always directed against the subordination of German imperialist interests to America. Now that German imperialism has once again shown its flag, he has become an enthusiastic great power politician and militarist. The Greens underwent a similar development 20 years ago.

Those who want to cast their vote against war and militarism on September 24 must vote for the SGP. It is the only party that advocates a socialist strategy against social inequality, militarism and war. We oppose the capitalist war hawks by fighting to unite the working class on both sides of the Atlantic.

According to the SGP election platform, "We reject all imperialist alliances and military blocs. We are for the dissolution of NATO and the European Union and fight instead for the United Socialist States of Europe. Our ally in the struggle against German militarism is the European, American and international working class."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact