

Germany's pro-war Left Party postures as a "party of peace"

Johannes Stern
19 April 2018

Following the air strike on Syria by the US and its European allies, the Left Party in Germany is trying to portray itself as an opponent of war. It is seeking to disguise its own support for the imperialist offensive against Syria in order to capture the growing anti-war sentiment of broad sections of the population and prevent a powerful anti-war movement from developing.

Immediately after the attack on Syria, the leadership of the Left Party organized a so-called "peace walk to the embassies of the nuclear powers France, Britain, Russia and the USA." On Wednesday, under the slogan "No to war," it called a rally in front of the Brandenburg Gate. "De-escalation is the order of the day!" it said on the poster. The speakers included the parliamentary leaders of the Left Party, Dietmar Bartsch and Sahra Wagenknecht.

While the Left Party is trying to present itself as a "party of peace," even a cursory analysis of its political line shows that it completely supports the goal of the German government and other European powers to replace the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad with a pro-Western puppet regime.

Following the weekend's military strikes, the Left Party leadership explicitly backed the "political solution" sought by French President Emmanuel Macron and the German government, which seeks to bring about regime change in Damascus through pressure on Russia and Iran. Bartsch said he hopes that the Macron "initiative, falls on fertile ground," in an interview with broadcaster Norddeutscher Rundfunk. Now was the time to "negotiate," that this will be "without Assad in the end, seems undisputed to me," he added.

Bartsch criticized the bombing as "contrary to international law" but did not oppose it in principle.

Instead, he repeated the propaganda with which it had been prepared. Chemical weapons were "completely egregious and the worst thing you can do," he said. He limited his criticism of the military strikes to the fact that they were not effective. He asked himself, "What did the bombs result in?"

On Tuesday, Bartsch reiterated in a press statement that he wanted "to make it clear once again that, of course, every use of chemical weapons is completely unacceptable to the Left Party. This must be cleared up and those responsible must be held accountable." However, such missions should only be carried out when "it is clear who bears the responsibility for what."

The attitude of the Left Party towards the US action largely coincides with that of the government, whereby the Left Party urges that Germany's imperialist interests be pursued more self-confidently and independently of the United States.

Bartsch praised the federal government, saying it was "reasonable that Germany did not participate in a military operation," but described it as "unacceptable" that it had supported the action politically. In particular, he was "very disappointed with the actions of (Foreign Minister) Heiko Maas." He was trying to "carry out a foreign policy correction, which was not good for Social Democracy." It was wrong to be "on the side of the Americans without any critical view."

In contrast, the Left Party praised Maas' predecessor Sigmar Gabriel, who had previously made clear that the Trump presidency should be understood as an opportunity to develop a more aggressive German foreign policy. Gabriel had criticized the US policy more sharply than Maas and shown himself more conciliatory towards Russia. Over the weekend, Sahra Wagenknecht wrote on Twitter: "Whose interests does Maas pursue? I never would have thought that I wanted

#Gabriel back.”

In a contribution to the *Tagesspiegel*, Gabriel described the attack on Syria not as “right and necessary.” He also reaffirmed his call for “a common European strategy in the various fields of international politics,” with a view to Russia, Turkey, Africa, China, “and also with regard to the US.”

It is no surprise that the Left Party supports this course. As early as last November, Bartsch had stood behind Gabriel’s foreign policy keynote address at the Foreign Policy Forum of the Körber Foundation in Berlin, and stated in broadcaster ARD’s Capital Studio: “I would like to express my wish that Germany take a different policy course in relation to the US. It is high time that the moral cowardice stops regarding the United States, that Germany confidently plays a role in the world, in the European context ... Clearly and boldly: We support Sigmar Gabriel and would wish that quickly becomes government policy.”

In the Syrian war, the Left Party was, from the beginning, a party of war and has defended the geo-strategic and economic interests of German imperialism. Even before the official start of the German war effort in December 2015, it supported the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition and campaigned for a more aggressive German intervention.

For example, in December 2012, leading figures in the Left Party, including Federal Chairwoman Katja Kipping and Vice-Chairman Jan Van Aken, together with representatives of the CDU, SPD and Greens, had signed a statement entitled “Syria: Freedom Needs Assistance,” which calls for a “humanitarian intervention.” The statement was initiated by the group Adopt a Revolution (AaR), with whom the Left Party still works today. On February 26, the defence spokeswoman for the Left Party, Christine Buchholz, together with the Green Party chairman Robert Habeck, appeared at an AaR rally outside the Russian Embassy in Berlin.

In April 2014, several Left Party parliamentarians—including Bartsch himself—voted to send a German frigate to the Mediterranean, nominally to destroy Syrian chemical weapons. And in October 2014, 14 leading Left Party politicians issued a statement entitled “Save Kobane!” which called on the government to launch a massive military intervention against the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

Since then, the Left Party has worked closely with Kurdish nationalist militias acting as ground troops for the United States in northern Syria.

Yesterday’s Left Party rally was not designed to end these pro-imperialist intrigues, but to continue them. With Michel Müller, the former deputy chairman of the SPD parliamentary group, and Ute Finckh-Krämer, speaker in the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, both leading representatives of the SPD, were among the speakers. Shortly before the rally, a “debate on the current situation in Syria” took place in the Bundestag, also on the initiative of the Left Party, in which the ruling class discussed and elaborated its imperialist strategy.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact