

Germany's Left Party demands independent German-European imperialist policy

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“General enthusiasm over the prospects of imperialism, furious defence of it and painting it in the brightest colours—such are the signs of the times,” wrote Lenin in his work *Imperialism*, which analysed the driving forces of the First World War. The dominance of finance capital over all areas of society and the bitter conflicts between the great powers over the redivision of the world resulted in “all propertied classes going over to the side of imperialism,” according to Lenin.

It would be impossible to provide a better description of the Left Party's response to the United States' withdrawal from the Iran nuclear accord. In the face of deepening conflicts between the German government and the United States, the Left Party has cast aside its tattered pacifist credentials. The party's leading personnel are gripped by a nationalist fervour and are demanding a more forceful assertion of German economic interests in the Middle East and the adoption of an aggressive German-European imperialist policy.

On Monday, Left Party parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht gave her backing to the government, which “stated very clearly” that “we want the Iran nuclear accord to be retained, and we are working towards this.” The Left Party has always demanded “not to subordinate ourselves to the US, but to attempt to pursue a more independent policy.” However, she found the statement by Foreign Minister Heiko Mas that the German government can do “absolutely nothing to protect German businesses from US sanctions” to be “really pathetic.”

It is of course necessary to “in some way ensure that we protect our economy and our companies against such sanctions,” continued Wagenknecht. “And it would certainly be possible if we threatened to impose counter-sanctions for every sanction that affects a

European company, instead of submissively subordinating ourselves.” She hopes that the German government “will take a clear position on this.” Ultimately, “all European politicians have a major interest in pursuing a more independent foreign policy and no longer subordinating ourselves to the United States.”

In an interview with Berlin daily *Tagesspiegel*, Dietmar Bartsch, the co-leader of the Left Party's parliamentary group, adopted a similar line. “The German government should not give way in the face of Trump's sanctions threat. They cannot allow his blackmail tactics to be successful.” The EU must “stick together on this—not just verbally but also with very concrete steps.” For example, the German government could “launch an EU fund that would support these companies doing business with Iran that are threatened by US sanctions.”

A statement by Klaus Ernst, who chairs the parliamentary committee on economic affairs, made clear that the Left Party views itself as the most consistent defender of Germany's economic interests. “Trump's threat to sanction European companies if they continue to cooperate with Iran in line with their governments' agreements is an unacceptable crossing of the line,” Ernst added.

Ernst continued, “Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany must resist this unprecedented blackmail together by supporting and extending assistance to those companies who have concluded deals in Iran or still want to do so... Anyone allowing themselves to be blackmailed has lost. Following the unprecedented threat by the American ambassador, a summons to the German Foreign Office would have been in order.”

Oskar Lafontaine adopted an even more aggressive stance. The former SPD politician and founding father

of the Left Party wrote last week on his Facebook page, “The new US ambassador Richard Grenell, a close Trump ally, tweeted that German companies should ‘immediately’ wind down their operations in Iran. If the German foreign minister had balls, he would summon this undiplomatic lout and tell him that Germany is not an American colony.”

Europe must “recognise that due to the system, this juggernaut will continue to act in this way.” “Capitalism’s strongest world power” is simply “incapable of peace.” Instead, “raw materials and markets” will be “conquered and secured by military interventions and more than 800 military bases around the world.” Europe must now “together with Russia and China, who also negotiated the nuclear deal, develop a strategy to calm this US war-mongering policy to prevent a global conflagration,” concluded Lafontaine.

Who is Lafontaine seeking to mobilise with his stupid anti-Americanism? The aggressive character of American imperialism is obvious. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Washington abandoned all restraint and sought to offset its economic decline with brutal wars of aggression. After horrific interventions that cost the lives of millions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, Washington is now preparing the next war for regime change in Iran, which poses the danger of a nuclear conflagration with Russia and China.

But German and European capitalism are no better. Berlin, Paris, and London have long participated in the US-led wars of aggression and are now striving for an expanded military role. Germany’s ruling class in particular is showing its true colours. Seven decades after the downfall of the Third Reich, the ruling elite has launched a massive rearmament program, is dreaming of a new German “global power” and is discussing behind the backs of the population the possibility of reintroducing military service and acquiring nuclear weapons.

The strengthening of German and European imperialism as demanded by Lafontaine, potentially in alliance with Russia and China, would not prevent a “global conflagration,” but rather accelerate it. A glance at the historical record is sufficient to prove this. Shifting alliances among the great powers, trade war measures and rearmament on all sides were the ingredients prior to the First and Second world wars

that ultimately led to disaster.

Today, as then, there is only one way to stop the war danger: the building of an international anti-war movement based on the working class and fighting for a socialist programme. This requires the revolutionary unity of European and American workers in struggle against the war-mongers on both sides of the Atlantic.

The fact that the Left Party belongs to the latter was underscored by an article by the party’s foreign policy spokesperson, Stefan Liebich, in the *Business and Diplomacy* magazine. In a piece entitled “foreign policy in turmoil,” Liebich declares rather bluntly, “Yes, Germany must realise its growing responsibility in the world.”

Like the Greens 20 years ago, the Left Party now stands ready to paint the return of German imperialism to the world stage “in the brightest possible colours,” and support it against mounting popular opposition. Liebich blustered about “interventions for sustainability, justice and peace,” and urged Germany to become “more involved in civil conflict prevention.” However, he left no doubt about the fact that this would include military deployments.

“But opposition to military interventions, as in Afghanistan, does not mean that not a single German soldier should be allowed to be abroad,” declared Liebich. “An operation such as the struggle against ebola, or the operation to destroy chemical weapons, as in the Mediterranean two years ago, are not excluded.” Personally, he is also “of the opinion that following a UN Security Council decision, i.e., faced with an immanent genocide as in Rwanda, we must decide on a case by case basis if and how we involve the army.”



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