

Germany's Left Party hails the SPD's chancellor candidate, pledges support for militarism and war

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The nomination of Germany's Finance Minister Olaf Scholz as the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) candidate for the post as the country's next chancellor has been greeted with great enthusiasm by the leadership of the Left Party.

Shortly after last Tuesday's nomination of Scholz, Left Party leader Katja Kipping gave an interview to German radio's Deutschlandfunk (Df) in which she pleaded for cooperation with Scholz following the next federal election due in October 2021. "I hope it's more than just playing around with ideas," she said, referring to a possible SPD-Left Party-Green (red-red-green) coalition government. It was now up to the SPD to convince "potential voters" with its lead candidate.

At the beginning of the week, Left Party parliamentary faction leader Dietmar Bartsch weighed in with his own contribution. In another detailed interview with the Df, he emphasised that Scholz was virtually the only alternative as the SPD's candidate for chancellor. He could say "from the point of view of the Left Party, but also if I put myself in the SPD's shoes, who else could one have nominated?" The nomination of Scholz was "a politically strategic decision," because he has "the chance" to "win votes from the Union [conservative Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union] and the Greens."

Thirty years after its Stalinist predecessor organisations, the SED (Socialist Unity Party) and the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism), backed the restoration of capitalism in East Germany, the Left Party is now preparing to take up a role in government at a federal level to implement an extreme right-wing programme. As the country's incumbent finance minister, Scholz personifies the anti-working class and

militaristic agenda of the ruling grand coalition like no other figure. Under his aegis, Germany's military budget has been massively increased and, in the form of the so-called coronavirus emergency packages, hundreds of billions of euros have been transferred into the accounts of the super-rich, large companies and banks.

Bartsch's statements leave no doubt that a possible red-red-green federal government led by Scholz would continue and intensify this reactionary course.

In response to the Df's remark that Scholz, as SPD general secretary under former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, was "a man who supported the Agenda politics," Bartsch replied: "Well, the fact that Olaf Scholz has a past I am very critical of is undisputed but, to be honest, I have always opposed the idea that it was first necessary to come to terms with everything, even in my own party." He had already formulated this position at party congresses as follows: "It's absurd to think that so long as the SPD has not paid back the war credits it agreed in 1914, we refuse to enter into any negotiations."

Bartsch's remarks leave no room for error. When the SPD betrayed its Marxist program in 1914 and agreed to war credits, it helped to initiate at the time the greatest slaughter in world history, in World War I, with tens of millions left dead. When Bartsch describes a "coming to terms" with this crime as "just absurd," referring to Scholz's role in drafting the Agenda policies and Hartz IV laws of the Schröder government, he is giving a clear signal to the ruling class. The Left Party is ready, if necessary, to climb over bodies to enforce the interests of German capitalism and imperialism faced with growing social and political

opposition from workers and youth.

In response to the Dlf's question whether "the Left Party has the internal strength" to "withstand the pressure when it comes to making decisions" as a governing party, Bartsch replied. "I can answer with a resounding yes." He always wanted "practice to be the criterion for truth, and look at how things are governed successfully in [the state of] Thuringia." One must "look at the data, not what we would like." In Berlin and Bremen, where the Left Party also governs in coalitions with the SPD and the Greens, "a calm, sensible policy is being implemented with the Left Party."

The meaning is clear. Wherever the Left Party participates in government at a state level with the parties responsible for Hartz IV and militarism, it carries out attacks on social rights, strengthens the police and secret service apparatuses, which are permeated by far-right terrorist structures and brutally deports migrant workers and their families. In Thuringia, where a Left Party member governs as premier, the Left Party has openly sided with the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD). In early March, for example, state premier Left Party leader Bodo Ramelow used his vote to ensure an AfD member took over the prestigious office of vice president of the state parliament.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Left Party has moved even further to the right. At the end of March, it voted in the Bundestag for the "Coronavirus emergency packages" launched by Scholz and the Grand Coalition. Since then, the party has been at the forefront of loosening up the lock-down policy to force workers back to work and once again fill the coffers of government and big business. In those states where the Left Party shares power, it has been a forceful advocate of the deadly "back-to-work" policy and is pressing for the reopening of schools.

The party reacts to the growing opposition from workers and youth with open hostility. When spontaneous mass demonstrations broke out in Germany in early June following the assassination of George Floyd in the US, the red-red-green senate in Berlin sanctioned brutal police violence against peaceful demonstrators. Even then, Bartsch stood fully behind the police and declared that they deserved "not less, but more social recognition and more personnel,

especially on the ground."

In his interview with Deutschlandfunk, he now also dropped any former mild criticisms of German foreign policy and assured the ruling class of his party's full support for the return of German militarism.

With regard to NATO's war policy, he declares: "To be honest, the Left Party will never dissolve NATO. This is an unparalleled overestimation, it's just absurd to always give this example. Nobody seriously believes—not even in the Left Party—that we would say as a prerequisite for entering government we must dissolve NATO, otherwise we won't talk. It's completely absurd."

With regard to the foreign missions currently being carried out by the German army (Bundeswehr), he could "also point out that we have already voted differently on mandates." For example, Bartsch himself "voted yes to the destruction of Assad's chemical weapons, as did other colleagues from a certain [i.e., his] parliamentary group."

He then makes clear that German militarism will continue in undiminished fashion under a "left" federal government. "Anyone with a head on his shoulders knows that when the Left assumes government responsibility we will not get in our planes on the same day to bring our boys back. That's absurd."

Bartsch's remarks lead to one conclusion only. The Left Party embraces Scholz not despite, but rather because of his reactionary policies. Like the other established parties of war and Hartz IV social misery, the SPD and the Greens, the Left Party is a right-wing bourgeois party representing the interests of the capitalist state and the country's wealthy upper-middle classes. Workers and youth who want to fight social cuts, militarism and war must adopt a socialist perspective, and build the Socialist Equality Party as the only alternative to the grand coalition.



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