

Germany: Left Party congress paving way for government participation and war

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At its party congress this coming weekend, Germany's Left Party will set an even more direct course towards government participation and support for war. The draft election programme presented by the departing leadership duo of Katja Kipping and Bernd Riexinger, and the statements of their designated successors, Janine Wissler and Susanne Hennig-Wellsow make this absolutely clear.

"It is time to begin a new phase in the party's development. The Left Party must give a clear indication that it will take responsibility," stated Hennig-Wellsow in a joint interview with Wissler in the latest Sunday edition of the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper.

The future party leaders were quite explicit in their statements. The Left Party is ready for a coalition with the pro-austerity, pro-war Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens at the federal level, which would intensify social spending cuts, the build-up of domestic state repression, the rearmament of the military, and the murderous pandemic policies.

Hennig-Wellsow boasted to the *Tagesspiegel* that the Left Party is already a party of government and is recognised even by the political right. "We have Minister President Bodo Ramelow in Thuringia, play an important role in the Federal Council and in the conferences with the Chancellor," she said. In Thuringia, a "Left Party/SPD/Green coalition is being tolerated by the CDU (Christian Democrats) for the first time in Germany, that shouldn't be underestimated. We govern in Berlin and Bremen. Our group in the federal parliament also works professionally."

Hennig-Wellsow's reference to "professional work" means the imposition of the ruling class's reactionary agenda in all areas. With regard to the coronavirus policy, she attack the limited lockdown measures adopted by the grand coalition from the right and provided propaganda for a rapid return to schools. The lockdown was "correct," but "the measures did not impact or protect everyone equally." She is "absolutely opposed to the performance pressure ... is now being passed on to parents and children." What is necessary are "unified regulations to bring this school year for the children to an end in a way that everyone can move up a year."

As the Left Party's state leader and parliamentary group leader in Thuringia, Hennig-Wellsow plays an active role in

enforcing the murderous policy of mass infection, which has already led to 70,000 deaths in Germany. The Left Party/SPD/Green state government has reopened schools and day-care facilities even though the incidence rate remains high and the new, more infectious variants are circulating. Last autumn, Ramelow praised the "Swedish model," thus explicitly backing the murderous policy of herd immunity.

Hennig-Wellsow also made clear that under her leadership, the Left Party would support foreign military interventions by the German army. "I can imagine certain classical blue helmet missions, such as in Cyprus, for example," she stated. "When the issue is securing peace after a conflict, one needs to consider such missions on a case-by-case basis." In January, the security policy spokesman for the Left Party, Matthias Höhn, appealed in a policy paper for German military interventions and the rearmament of the German army.

The Left Party is also prepared to go all the way on domestic state repression. "With the CDU (in Thuringia), we had to create three additional posts for the state intelligence service, otherwise they would not have backed the budget," Hennig-Wellsow acknowledged. She cynically added, "That sounds banal, but for us it isn't. As a party, we want to abolish the intelligence service." Apparently, only on paper. In the political real world, the Left Party is strengthening the police as well as the domestic intelligence service, which is the agency at the centre of the right-wing extremist conspiracy within the state apparatus.

Wissler supports this course and also spoke in favour of government participation. "I'm not saying that Left Party ministers can't achieve anything," she said. Asked whether she thought it would be a "betrayal of left-wing ideals" if "as part of participating in government more positions within the intelligence service need to be created," she said, "No, that is not a betrayal." The important thing is to have "clear red lines in an election programme." The Left Party will "not join a government that approves foreign interventions, eliminates social programmes or democratic rights, and pushes ahead with privatizations."

This is a flat-out lie. Wherever the Left Party governs in coalition with the SPD and Greens at the state level, it is pushing ahead with the attacks on social spending and

democratic rights, privatises everything it can lay its hands on, and ruthlessly deports refugees. Just a few days ago, it was revealed that the SPD/Left Party/Green government in Bremen intends to cut 440 full-time health care workers' jobs. The assault on the health care sector is being overseen by the "left" senator for health, Claudia Bernhard.

With regard to foreign interventions, the party's "red lines" in its programme are not worth the paper they are written on. Everyone knows that as a party of government, the Left Party would support the war policy at the federal level. Together with Hennig-Wellsow and Höhn, other members of the party, like the parliamentary group leader in the Bundestag, Dietmar Bartsch, and foreign policy spokesman Gregor Gysi, have made this clear. The current election programme is so strongly pro-military that it has even triggered disquiet in the party's ranks ahead of the congress.

For example, in the party's newspaper, *Junge Welt*, Sevim Da?delen and Ulla Jelpke write in a piece with the revealing title "Farewell to a policy of peace," "Language can be treacherous." Due to the formulations in the election programme, "programmatic wiggle room to send the army on new foreign interventions" remains. This "suggests the interpretation" that this "leaves the door open to a government option including the SPD, left Party, and Greens," which would "push ahead with the further militarisation of the EU, launch new foreign interventions with the blessing of the UN and EU, and approve new arms exports at the same time."

They also hypocritically expressed their surprise that in the section titled "Enforce human rights," an outright "regime change fund" is proposed, "which initially sounds like a means of international solidarity" but will "in the reality of a government of an imperialist power prove to be a fund for the overthrow of undesirable governments around the world, like similar funds in the US."

Like Wissler, Sevim Da?delen and Ulla Jelpke have no qualms about the regime change operations of German imperialism, but are themselves deeply implicated. They are merely concerned that too openly adopting militarist rhetoric would undermine foreign interventions and at the same time make it impossible for the Left Party to control the mounting opposition to the return of German militarism.

Da?delen is the representative on the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, the deputy member on the parliamentary defence committee, and is on the board of the German Society for Foreign Policy (DGAP), which played a central role in the reviving of German militarism. Jelpke is deputy member of the committee for human rights and humanitarian aid, and has repeatedly appealed for "humanitarian interventions." In 2014, she was among the Left Party politicians who demanded a more forceful German intervention in Iraq.

The party tendency Marx 21, to which Wissler belonged until her candidacy, is more than any other faction in favour of an aggressive imperialist foreign policy. Marx 21 member

Christine Buchholz has sat on the parliamentary defence committee without interruption since 2009. As a member of Bundestag delegations, she regularly visits the army units in their area of operations. Marx 21 also plays a central role in the imperialist offensive of Germany against Russia.

The *Tagesspiegel* presents Wissler as a "Marxist" and Marx 21 and its predecessor organisation, Linksruck (Left Shift) as "Trotskyist associations." In reality, the right-wing and pro-imperialist policies of Marx 21 and Linksruck has nothing to do with Marxism, let alone the Russian revolutionary and founder of the Fourth International, Leon Trotsky. He did not advocate the building of essentially right-wing bourgeois parties, but for the mobilisation of the working class on the basis of an internationalist and socialist programme against capitalism and war.

Marx 21 does not stand in the tradition of Marx and Trotsky, but rather the anti-Trotskyist tradition of the International Socialist Tendency founded by Tony Cliff. Shortly after the end of World War II, Cliff broke with Trotskyism and designated the Soviet Union as state capitalist, in spite of the continued existence of the progressive property relations created by the 1917 October revolution. Like other forms of state capitalism, Cliff's standpoint amounted to an adaptation to imperialism and a form of anti-communism concealed with "left" rhetoric.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reintroduction of capitalism by the Stalinist bureaucracy, the state capitalists and the privileged sections of the middle class for which they speak moved fully into the camp of imperialism. In Germany, they integrated themselves into the bourgeois state, first by joining the SPD and later the Left Party. With Wissler, they now have a party leader and potential key figure in the formation of a federal government and are ready to directly organise a new round of attacks on the working class and imperialist wars.



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