

Germany's Left Party closes ranks with federal government and NATO on Ukraine

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28 February 2022

The Russian government's invasion of Ukraine must be condemned from the standpoint of international socialism. But the NATO powers, which provoked the conflict by encircling the country and waging countless anti-Russian proxy wars, are using the resort to arms to further escalate the conflict with Moscow and implement their plan to colonise the country by force. To this end, they are deploying far-reaching sanctions, which will hit the Russian and European population especially hard, and preparing military intervention.

In Germany, all the parliamentary parties have closed ranks behind the government of Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) to advance this goal, which threatens to lead to a third world war. The Left Party is playing a particularly nasty role in this, cloaking its support for NATO aggression and government policy with white doves of peace in an effort to take advantage of the anti-war sentiment of the population for its reactionary aims.

On Thursday, party leaders Susanne Hennig-Wellsow and Janine Wissler, and the chairpersons of the parliamentary group in the Bundestag Amira Mohamed Ali and Dietmar Bartsch, published a joint statement in which they described the war against Ukraine as "a new stage of aggression by Putin," without mentioning NATO's provocations.

Then on Friday, the party founder and long-time parliamentary group leader, Gregor Gysi, made it unmistakably clear on broadcaster ZDF's morning show that the party was fully behind the trans-Atlantic alliance. "Everything I said that was critical of NATO has turned out to be garbage," he declared with regard to the Ukraine war.

"I am also in favour of sanctions in this case," Gysi continued. These should not hit the population, if possible, he explained, but he also did not rule out halting gas imports as long as the US also stopped its oil imports.

Bartsch was even more explicit on Friday morning. He

stressed that the Left Party must speak out in favour of sanctions. "As the Left Party, we have always been against sanctions because they usually hit the wrong people, namely the population," the Bundestag parliamentary group leader told the Deutsche Presse-Agentur in Berlin. But, "this historic break will also require a reassessment from the Left Party."

Bartsch even attacked the federal government from the right and called for more far-reaching sanctions than those already in place. He declared the discussion about steps taken against the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to be hypocritical. "Because no gas is currently flowing through this pipeline," he said, "stopping the certification [of the pipeline] changes practically nothing for now. In reality, it is meaningless. If anything, you have to talk about gas supplies as a whole, about the Druzhba pipeline and about Nord Stream 1."

Bartsch wants to halt gas supplies from Russia altogether, the effect of which would be devastating for the populations of Russia and Europe, as gas prices would explode, further driving up already high rates of inflation.

Last week, representatives of the party backed Chancellor Scholz and suggested that German interests against Russia would be best served by sending Angela Merkel to Moscow as a mediator. "We have to come back to the policy that Angela Merkel has made," said Bartsch on the *Phoenix* TV channel. "She always focused on dialogue, even when it was almost hopeless," he added, in praise of the ex-chancellor.

Gysi supported Bartsch's proposal. He wanted Merkel to be accompanied by her predecessor Gerhard Schröder, who works for the Russian energy company Gazprom and is a personal friend of President Putin. Merkel was good at negotiating, he told *Der Spiegel*. "She always came up with something when nothing else seemed to work," he said. "And former SPD leader Schröder 'just happened to have a good relationship,'" he added.

The thrust of these proposals is obvious. Germany—under both Schröder’s and Merkel’s chancellorships—was as aggressive as the US in pushing forward the eastward expansion of NATO, the world’s largest military alliance. Schröder’s chancellorship began in 1999 with Germany’s first international combat mission: the violent destruction of Yugoslavia by NATO. In 2001, he sent the Bundeswehr, the country’s armed forces, to Afghanistan, where it waged war for twenty years.

As Christian Democratic Party (CDU) leader, Merkel supported the Iraq war when it was still rejected by the Schröder government. As chancellor, she continued the Afghanistan mission and deployed the Bundeswehr to Iraq, Syria and Mali, among other places. Under her chancellorship, a fundamental reorientation of foreign policy took place in 2013/14. According to a strategy paper by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) at the time, Germany was to pursue its strength as a “trading and exporting nation” globally, by military means as well.

The same year, the Merkel government, in close cooperation with the Obama administration, organised the right-wing coup in Ukraine, which forms the basis of today’s conflict. It is telling that the right-wing Ukrainian nationalist Petro Poroshenko, who became president thanks to the coup, praises Merkel as much as the Left Party does. “Germany and Angela Merkel have been, if you can use that word, a guardian angel for Ukraine,” he recently told the *NTV* channel.

The Left Party was involved in the coup in Ukraine and even supported the federal government at the time, which, after organising the overturn of the Yanukovych government, set itself up as a mediator between the puppet government in Ukraine and Russia in order to advance its own geostrategic and economic interests in the region. The Left Party was also involved in drafting the above-mentioned SWP paper in 2013, with its former foreign policy spokesperson Stephan Liebich.

As early as 2012, numerous Left Party leaders called for support for the so-called Syrian opposition, which, with the inclusion of Islamist forces, had been built up to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad. Two years later, in October 2014, Bartsch and other leading Left Party figures called for military action against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, which had previously been strengthened by the West against the Syrian government.

In the last Bundestag election campaign, when it was eyeing participation in government with the SPD and the

Greens, the Left Party dropped all its veils. For example, Bartsch declared that in government, the Left Party would support the Bundeswehr’s foreign missions and NATO membership. Now, the party is fully integrated into German war policy even without formal government participation.

If there is a faction in the Left Party that demands a different attitude towards Russia and rejects sanctions, it does so from the standpoint of Germany’s imperialist interests. For example, long-time parliamentary faction leader Sahra Wagenknecht declared on Tuesday: “Sanctions don’t solve any problem, they harm the EU and Germany, while the US benefits.”

The fact that all capitalist parties are backing the German government and NATO confirms the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International that war can only be stopped and a third world war prevented if the international working class is mobilised on the basis of a socialist programme. In its statement on the Ukraine war, the ICFI, quoting Leon Trotsky, declared:

“Not to bind itself to the national state in time of war, to follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle, is possible only for that party that has already declared irreconcilable war on the national state in time of peace.” To follow “the map of the class struggle” means to root opposition to imperialism in the fight to unify the international working class in opposition to exploitation, inequality and the capitalist system.

The ICFI calls for an immediate end to the war. In opposing the invasion of Ukraine, we denounce the policies of US/NATO imperialism, whose claims to be defending democracy and human rights are blood-drenched with hypocrisy.



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