

# German Left Party backs war drive against Russia

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The German government is taking the Putin regime's reactionary attack on Ukraine as an opportunity to enact long-standing plans for massively rearming the Bundeswehr (German armed forces) and militarily confronting Russia. In addition to imposing comprehensive sanctions and amassing further troops on Russia's border, on Sunday the Bundestag (German parliament) announced the tripling of Germany's 2022 military budget.

The Left Party plays a key role in implementing aggressive German military policy by cloaking it in peace-loving slogans to slip it past enormous popular opposition to war. The Left Party parliamentary faction in the Bundestag nominally rejected the government's proposed military budget increases, but introduced its own resolution that adopted the key passages of the government's legislation.

Some Left Party members of parliament criticized the federal government's proposed €100 billion special fund for the Bundeswehr, but at the same time made clear their agreement with the essential coordinates of the government's policy.

The parliamentary faction stated that Russia had done serious damage to the "peace of the European order" by recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia and annexing Crimea. In doing so it failed to mention the countless wars waged by NATO in violation of international law and at the cost of millions of lives. The Left Party faction ultimately called for "political, economic, financial support measures" for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia.

But even this far-reaching adoption of the NATO position, which has systematically escalated the Ukraine conflict for years and provoked the Russian invasion, did not go far enough for some in the Left Party. For example, long-time parliamentary faction

leader and current foreign policy spokesman Gregor Gysi advocated supporting the German government's motion, and with it the German rearmament program and weapons deliveries to Ukraine.

Gysi accused dissenting members of parliament of being cold-hearted toward the Ukrainian people. In a letter to parliamentary faction colleagues, including Sahra Wagenknecht and Sevim Dağdelen, he leveled the accusation that they were only interested in saving their "old ideology in every aspect: NATO is evil, the US is evil, the German government is evil, and that's the end of it for you."

This is after Gysi declared that with the Russian attack on Ukraine, every critique he had ever made of NATO had become wastepaper. On Tuesday, he told the radio broadcaster Süd-West-Funk that his party would have to put thought into further eastward expansion of NATO to protect countries like Finland from a Russian invasion.

Gysi is in no way isolated in the Left Party with this position. Current faction leader Dietmar Bartsch also made clear that he agrees with increasing the combat capacity of the Bundeswehr and that he just wants to achieve it differently and plan it better: "The miserable state of the troops is not so much a money problem as a management problem. We will not agree to an amendment to the Basic Law that promises 100 billion in the Bundeswehr without a concrete plan," Bartsch told the *Rheinische Post*.

Only the Left Party prime minister of the State of Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow, was more outspoken. He attended Sunday's Bundestag session in his capacity as president of the Bundesrat (Federal Assembly).

"In this capacity, it was particularly important for me to make it clear through my presence that the states stand firmly by the side of the federal government and

the Bundestag in these difficult times, which necessarily and rightly must not remain silent when it comes to taking a clear stand against belligerent aggression,” he later noted on his website. “Effective measures and sanctions are now needed against all those who have calculated war and—like the Russian oligarchs, for example—keep the Putin system running.”

While Ramelow distanced himself from the tripling of the German military budget, he called for “a well-equipped Bundeswehr” and the introduction of “universal conscription.” “Both, of course, must have a modern design and the mission of the troops must be formulated so clearly that the population can unite behind their goals,” the Thuringian prime minister said.

The demands for rearmament, compulsory military service and aggressive action against Russia are not a reaction to the war in Ukraine, as the leaders of the parliamentary factions would have one believe, rather they are fully in accord with the Left Party line.

The militarism of the Left Party, which it is less and less able to cover up with pacifist phrase mongering, results from its unqualified defense of capitalism. Its predecessor party, the PDS, which represented the Stalinist bureaucracy in East Germany, helped reintroduce capitalism to the former East after German reunification, which was not only accompanied by terrible social attacks but also unleashed German militarism. As a party of the state apparatus, the proto-Left Party was intimately involved in this process from the beginning.

When the German government announced the “end of German military restraint” in 2013 and 2014, the Left Party was on board. The Left Party’s foreign policy spokesman at the time, Stephan Liebich, collaborated on the key strategy paper “New Power, New Responsibility,” which provided the blueprint for the return of German militarism. The Left Party has subsequently supported the German government in putting policy into practice in Ukraine.

Last August, for the first time the majority of the Left Party parliamentary faction voted for a mission for the Bundeswehr, namely the exit mission in Afghanistan. In the subsequent election campaign, it openly announced that a government that included the Left Party would not end any foreign deployment of the Bundeswehr and would not leave NATO.

If there are some representatives of the Left Party

who still criticize NATO’s actions and reject sanctions against Russia, as Wagenknecht and Da?delen do, it is not from the standpoint of the international unity of workers, but from the point of view of German imperialism. They speak for a faction of the ruling elite that hopes closer economic ties with Russia will give it greater independence from the United States. “Sanctions don’t solve any problems; they harm the EU and Germany while benefiting the US,” Wagenknecht declared on Tuesday.

NATO aggression against Russia and the return of German militarism threaten to plunge the planet into barbarism. Putin’s regime of oligarchs has nothing but foul nationalism to offer, as the war is demonstrating. The only way to prevent a catastrophe is through the international mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program. This is evident as all capitalist parties sound the same bugle.



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