

Left Party's call for protests is a reactionary manoeuvre

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19 August 2022

At its conference in Erfurt, Germany, in mid-June, the Left Party supported NATO's war course against Russia. Numerous representatives spoke out in favour of sanctions and even arms deliveries to Kiev. "The newly elected party leadership has the task of controlling the growing opposition to this madness and passing on the costs of war to the working class," we commented at the time.

This assessment has been confirmed. In recent days, the party's newly elected co-chair Martin Schirdewan held several press conferences and interviews in which he warned of a "hot autumn." In doing so, he signalled that his party would do everything in its power to subordinate the explosive opposition to the federal government's war policy.

Speaking on the *Tagesthemen* news programme on Monday, Schirdewan said the government was implementing "an anti-social policy, which is above all at the expense of the majority of the population." It was "quite natural that the population is displeased about this," he said, and added that the Left Party was therefore "striving at this point to organise a hot autumn of protests against the social coldness of the Federal Republic."

Schirdewan went on to explain that his party's aim was "to convince people with our social policy proposals and to put pressure on the federal government." This was "also bitterly necessary when you look at the dispute in the federal government about how best to find the way out of the current crisis."

He therefore invited everyone "who wants to bring democratic pressure onto the streets to take the fight to the government at this point and to finally also take the interests of the majority of the population into consideration and to finally also make policies that protect the weakest in society."

Who is Schirdewan trying to fool? The current government is the most right-wing since the end of the Second World War. It is using the Russian invasion of Ukraine, provoked by NATO's encirclement of Russia, to organise the biggest rearmament of Germany since Hitler and to reassert itself as the leading military power in Europe. Immediately after the war began, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a "special fund for the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces]" amounting to €100 billion.

Now, the government is passing on the war costs to the population with all brutality. The government's gas surcharge is

a war tax. Workers and their families are being made to bear the costs of NATO's proxy war in Ukraine and pay for the insane great power and militarisation plans of the German ruling class.

In the end, every cent that goes into rearmament and war will be extracted from the working class. For example, the new draft budget, which will be debated in the Bundestag immediately after the summer break, provides for strict adherence to the debt ceiling, limiting social spending. According to the key points already approved by the cabinet, net borrowing in 2023 is to be reduced by about €122 billion compared to 2022. The so-called inflation compensation law introduced by Finance Minister Christian Lindner (Liberal Democratic Party, FDP) also means even more money for the rich.

Schirdewan's claim that "political pressure" can persuade the government to "change course" is absurd. The government's response to the enormous opposition to its class war policy is not concessions, but aggressive threats and a further expansion of the state's repressive apparatus.

Just last weekend, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (Social Democratic Party, SPD) told *Bild am Sonntag* that 1,000 new posts would be created in the federal police force to combat supposed "left-wing extremists," youth climate activists and alleged "massive disinformation campaigns by Russia" and other "dangers." Moreover, an additional €20 billion is to be poured into so-called "cybersecurity."

Schirdewan is silent about all this because he and his party agree with the reactionary course of the federal government. Wherever the Left Party forms coalitions with the SPD and Greens at the state level—or even heads the government, as in Thuringia—like these parties of war and welfare cuts, it itself carries out fierce social attacks and pushes the stepping up of powers for the police and secret services.

The Left Party also toes the line on the question of war. Speaking to broadcaster ARD a week ago, Schirdewan reaffirmed the course adopted at the Erfurt party conference. He backed the sanctions against Russia and rejected any criticism of NATO. "I would say that Vladimir Putin bears the sole responsibility and decision for this war of aggression, which is against international law," he declared.

From the start, the *World Socialist Web Site* has called the

Russian invasion reactionary and strongly condemned it. But it is ultimately a desperate response by the capitalist Putin regime to the imperialist offensive by the NATO powers, which have systematically encircled Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy 30 years ago and are now pursuing the goal of completely subjugating the resource-rich and geostrategically central country.

This course, which conjures up the danger of a third world war, is supported by the Left Party. It stands in solidarity with Ukraine, “which must suffer this war of aggression,” which is “not at all a subject of discussion in the party”, assured Schirdewan. This also applied to Sahra Wagenknecht, he said. For example, the former parliamentary party leader had “corrected” her much-criticised statement from the beginning of the month and had also “expressed herself accordingly.”

In a tweet on August 1, Wagenknecht had initially spoken of an “insane war against Russia.” For this, she was sharply attacked within the Left Party, whereupon she relativised her statement and called Russia the aggressor. At the same time, she continues to call for an end to sanctions and for the Baltic Sea pipeline Nord Stream 2, which has been put on hold, to be put into operation. Even if she does not speak for the majority in her party, she enjoys support and is also courted by the media. The reason for this is as simple as it is reactionary.

When Wagenknecht and other Left Party representatives criticise NATO’s war course against Russia, they do so not from the standpoint of the international working class, but from the standpoint of German imperialism. They speak for a section of the ruling class that regards closer economic ties with Russia as a precondition for greater political and military independence from the US. There are representatives of this tendency in all parties—especially in the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The activities of the Left Party are aimed at closer cooperation with precisely these forces. Significantly, the Left Party’s call for a protest, for an initial “Monday demonstration” in Leipzig on September 5 was immediately welcomed by the AfD. “Good that the Left Party has finally woken up too,” cheered the AfD state parliamentary group in Saxony on Twitter. According to media reports, Left Party headquarters wants to organise a “national day of protest” for September 17.

The emerging coordination and cooperation with the far-right, who regularly organise their own “Monday demos” against refugees and coronavirus protections, is so obvious in this context that some individual party representatives are making it a public issue. “But when it comes to social protests, please keep your distance from right-wing radical organisers,” Left Party state premier in Thuringia Bodo Ramelow warned earlier this week.

Coming from the “left-wing” minister-president, this is pure travesty. Especially in Thuringia, the Left Party-SPD-Green state government under Ramelow’s leadership cooperates with

the fascists in the state parliament committees and hoists them into important political offices. In early 2020, Ramelow even used his own vote to make AfD member Michael Kaufmann vice-president of the Thuringia state parliament.

The Left Party’s orientation towards the federal government and the most right-wing political forces is no accident. It is an expression of a definite social orientation. The heirs to the Stalinist state party of the former East Germany, which helped organise German unity on a capitalist basis in 1990, do not represent the interests of workers but those of the bourgeois state and wealthy middle classes, who fear nothing more than a revolutionary uprising of the working class.

The Left Party’s attempts to channel the explosive social opposition into right-wing, nationalist channels and subordinate it to the federal government’s war policy should be met with contempt and rejected by workers and young people. The only way to beat back the official war policy and the related social attacks is through the methods of class struggle—guided by a clear strategy and perspective.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) calls for the building of independent rank-and-file action committees in the neighbourhoods, educational institutions, factories, and all workplaces to organise strikes and protests. To network the resistance throughout Germany, Europe and internationally and to arm it with the necessary political programme, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has created the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

The struggle against social cuts, war and fascism is inseparable from the struggle against their cause, capitalism, and against all the establishment parties—above all the nominally “left” ones—that defend the bankrupt profit system. It requires the independent mobilisation of the working class based on an international socialist programme and the building of the SGP and the ICFI as a new mass party of the working class.



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