

Why the Left Party fears a repeat of the Berlin state elections

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The Left Party in Germany opened its campaign for the February 12, 2023 Berlin state elections with several brief statements.

The party is strengthening “social issues, social coexistence and public infrastructures,” it says on its website. “The people of Berlin now have the opportunity to decide what is really important to them in the face of ongoing crises,” state leader Katina Schubert said. The party’s newly selected mayoral candidate Klaus Lederer even spoke of “restoring lost trust in democracy.”

These terse pronouncements themselves are based on grotesque lies. First, the Left Party does not stand for progressive social policies, but for radical cuts in social spending; and second, the party did not welcome the opportunity for Berliners to vote again on these disastrous policies, but tried to prevent such a vote.

Even as the state constitutional court hinted in September that it was considering a complete re-run of the state elections in view of the glaring electoral shortcomings, Left Party politicians Moheb Shafaqyar and Antonio Leonhardt claimed that this move was “not legally justified” in an angry article in the *Tagesspiegel*.

Should the court stick to its assessment, they wrote, “it would perpetuate the chaotic conditions in Berlin and itself become part of the problem of state organisation.” So, in keeping with its Stalinist traditions, the Left Party did not declare that the undemocratic organisation of the election—for which it and the other two parties in the Berlin Senate (state executive) were responsible—was a “state-organisational problem,” but rather the court’s insistence on democratic elections!

In its rejection of re-holding the election, the Left Party revealed the same contempt for the electorate that

already underlay the disastrous organisation of the ballot. The policy of war and social devastation pursued by all the establishment parties, including the Left Party, is incompatible with democratic popular participation. The opposition to this disastrous policy is too great.

This is particularly clear in the case of the Left Party, which likes to call itself the party of “peace and social justice.” It also fears a fresh vote because, according to the polls, it could even fall short of its poor result in the last election, which would then be its tenth consecutive electoral failure at federal and state level.

The primary reason for this is the Left Party’s right-wing and militaristic policies. It is an integral component of the all-party conspiracy that is stepping up the war against Russia, spending billions rearming the German military and passing on the costs of this madness to working people.

While doing so, the party acts particularly aggressively against anyone who opposes the official war course. In June, lead candidate Lederer denounced questioning about the background of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the *Taz* newspaper as a “left-reactionary love of peace” and demanded comprehensive arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Those who did not agree with the massive armament of Ukraine by NATO — and thus with the proxy war against Russia being conducted on the backs of the Ukrainian population — “do not regard people as subjects, but as occupants of imperial spheres of interest and as a kind of shifting mass of great powers,” Lederer said. Weapons deliveries were necessary in order to take seriously “people with their needs, sensitivities, wishes and fears.”

There can be no more cynical way to justify the destruction of a country in the interests of German and

American geopolitics. NATO deliberately provoked Vladimir Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine and is now using it for an all-out campaign against Russia to subjugate and plunder that country. In doing so, it is openly relying on far-right battalions and neo-Nazis in Ukraine. For the Left Party, these are "people with their fears." According to this logic, the war against Russia, which strikes the Ukrainian people first and threatens to lead to the nuclear annihilation of humanity, serves to strengthen the "subjects" in Ukraine!

This corresponds to the attitude of the entire Social Democratic Party (SDP)-Left Party-Green Senate in Berlin. On May 8 and 9 this year, it banned the presence of Soviet flags at any commemoration of the liberation of Berlin, despite its being the Red Army which finally drove the fascists out of the city. Earlier, the "red-red-green" coalition dismissed a disciplinary complaint against right-wing extremist professor Jörg Baberowski, who had physically attacked a student. Baberowski is known for his vulgar falsification of history, for example, declaring that Hitler was not cruel.

As before the two world wars, aggressive militarism is accompanied by fierce attacks on workers' social rights. In Berlin, the catastrophic social consequences of the war policy can be seen as if under a magnifying glass.

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At the beginning of the year, the poverty rate in the German capital was officially 16.4 percent. One in four children lives in a household affected by poverty or at risk of poverty. In the face of galloping inflation--a consequence of the pandemic policy, the economic war against Russia and the resulting energy emergency--the poverty rate has risen drastically.

The Berlin state ministry for integration, labour and social affairs, headed by former Left Party leader Katja Kipping, continues to exacerbate this poverty. In March, the Berlin state government passed a double budget for 2022 and 2023, which included further sharp austerity measures, reducing the two-year budget from 78.3 billion to 76.6 billion euros. The focus of the cuts was again on the social sectors. Even education, which is already in a run-down state, is being cut further.

Because the last protective measures against the pandemic--from which more than 5,000 have already

died in Berlin--were dropped, the situation in the hospitals, day-care centres, schools and administration is becoming worse. At the same time, the banks and corporations are receiving government hand-outs worth billions.

The first "red-red" Senate under the Social Democrats and Left Party from 2002 onward, which included the right-wing extremist finance senator Thilo Sarrazin (SPD), implemented austerity measures, unprecedented in the post-war period. Wages in the public sector were cut by 10 percent, jobs were eliminated en masse and municipal housing sold off to speculators. This policy is now being further intensified by the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party.

Given this record, the Left Party shuns elections like the devil abhors holy water. There is no support for these policies except among affluent upper middle-class layers, whom both the Left Party and the Greens court.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is therefore turning the rerun of the Berlin state elections into a referendum on the right-wing and militarist policies of all the Senate parties. We do not fear the elections, but welcome them, because they provide workers an opportunity to settle accounts with the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party.

Our election appeal concludes with the words: "We call on anyone who does not want to accept outrageous levels of social inequality, the destruction of the health and education system, and, finally, the nuclear destruction of our planet: Support our election campaign and vote for the SGP on February 12! Register now as an active supporter."



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