

Germany's Left Party on a war course: Leading members advocate arms deliveries to Ukraine

Johannes Stern
25 November 2022

The Left Party is playing “a particularly foul role” in pushing through war policies and the associated social attacks against the population, writes the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) in its statement on the Berlin state election. The accuracy of this assessment is now underscored by recent statements by leading Left Party member Bodo Ramelow, who as well as being Thuringia’s state prime minister is also the incumbent president of the Bundesrat (Upper House of the federal parliament).

In an interview published Monday by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Ramelow spoke out vehemently in favour of more German arms deliveries to Ukraine and rejected any negotiated solution with Russia.

There was a time, “even after the occupation of Crimea,” when he “still relied on certain dialogue formats” and advocated a “process of negotiation” with Russia, Ramelow stated. But that “presupposes there is still a hope for democratization, stabilization and civilization.” And that had been “over since February 24.”

Then, the politically most influential man of the Left Party—after the federal president, the president of the Bundestag (federal parliament) and the chancellor, the president of the Bundesrat holds the fourth highest state office in terms of protocol—stated his unreserved support for the NATO war against Russia. “I used to be an opponent of arms deliveries,” he said. “Today, I say in addition: everyone who is attacked has the right to defend himself.”

This is in line with the official propaganda of the imperialist governments and media, which spread the fairy tale of a Ukrainian defensive war in order to arm the pro-Western regime in Kiev to the teeth and fuel the proxy war against nuclear power Russia. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is reactionary, but the narrative of the sole Russian aggressor turns reality on its head.

The main warmongers are not in the Kremlin, but in Washington, Brussels and Berlin. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy 30 years ago, the United States and its European allies, led by Germany, have waged numerous wars of aggression in the Balkans, the Middle

East and North Africa in violation of international law. They have reduced entire countries to rubble—with millions of deaths.

In Eastern Europe, the NATO powers have systematically encircled Russia. They installed a regime in Kiev in 2014 by means of a right-wing coup and have since massively armed it. In doing so, they deliberately provoked the Putin regime’s intervention. Now, they continue to fuel the conflict in order to subjugate the geostrategically important and resource-rich country and install a pro-Western puppet regime in Moscow itself.

Ramelow and the Left Party are among the most aggressive defenders of this policy. Like other pseudo-left forces internationally, they criticize the NATO powers not for flooding the Ukrainian army and the far-right formations operating within it with weapons and for waging an imperialist war offensive against Russia—but for not being aggressive enough. Ramelow attacks the German government, which is playing a leading role in the NATO offensive, from the right.

“The pressure on Putin and the kleptocracy must grow,” he demanded. He was “in favour of confiscating all assets and especially business shares of the oligarchs—including cash assets.” In addition, he would have “long ago put the entire energy industry, which is under Russian control in Germany, under state supervision.” This was being done “in part, but not consistently.” Russia was also waging “its war in Germany at the petrol stations; via the price of electricity and natural gas.”

This is nothing but anti-Russian warmongering. Of course, Ramelow knows full well that skyrocketing energy prices are a direct result of the war and sanctions policy he supports against Russia. “Sanctions always hurt,” he declared cynically. “Sanctions are decided so that they hurt. And that they also hurt our side is clear.”

In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Ramelow also backs the ruling class’s broader great power plans, which systematically exploit the conflict to massively rearm and increase Germany’s weight, especially in Eastern Europe. “If we want to think of Europe, Warsaw must become as important as Paris,” he says. “How do you deal with Transnistria? How do you deal with Moldova? These regions must become part of

an overall European architecture, otherwise Europe will fail."

At the end of the interview, Ramelow gives free rein to his thoroughly militaristic attitudes. He praises the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) to the skies, explicitly backs its missions abroad, calls for the reintroduction of compulsory military service and boasts of his close personal ties to the troops.

Since I became state prime minister, the Bundeswehr has been on non-stop missions, including for our civilian population. Soldiers are part of this country, part of our active assistance. I can only return gratitude. I have just presented Battalion 383 with the flag ribbon of the Free State of Thuringia. I am deeply convinced that a social year [either military service or in social/health services] would be good for all people in our country.

In the Left Party leadership, Ramelow's aggressive war rhetoric has caused some unrest. Speaking to the *Funke Mediengruppe* newspapers, party co-chair Martin Schirdewan said that while he shared Ramelow's view "that the pressure on Putin has to increase," he was not convinced that the party was "in the right place." However, he said, arms deliveries were "not the party's position; we are making a strong case for alternatives to military logic."

Who is Schirdewan trying to fool? Ramelow's positions are completely in line with the party's. At its conference in Erfurt in mid-June, the Left Party had already thrown its weight behind the NATO offensive against Russia, and numerous party representatives aggressively banged the drum for sanctions against Russia and even for arms deliveries to Kiev. Schirdewan himself also promulgates this course. In interviews, he regularly advocates sanctions against Russia and rejects any criticism of NATO. Putin bore "the sole responsibility and decision ... for this war of aggression in violation of international law," he railed, in an interview with ARD television.

The militarism of the Left Party, which Ramelow so aggressively parades, is not an individual issue. It ultimately results from the party's pro-capitalist orientation. Its Stalinist predecessor organization, the SED/PDS, supported the restoration of capitalism in the former East Germany (GDR), not only bringing about a social catastrophe but also paving the way for the return of German militarism. As the party of the state and the upper middle classes in the GDR, it had long played a key role in this.

For example, Stefan Liebich, then foreign policy spokesman for the Left Party, was involved in drafting the paper "New Power—New Responsibility." Published in the fall of 2013, the paper formed the basis for Germany's return to an aggressive foreign and great power policy and for the bellicose speeches

by then foreign minister Steinmeier, federal president Gauck and defence minister von der Leyen at the 2014 Munich Security Conference.

Since then, Germany's new war policy has been put into practice with the full support of the Left Party. In this, a particularly aggressive role is played by pseudo-left tendencies such as Marx 21, allied with Britain's Socialist Workers Party, from which, significantly, the Left Party's co-chair Janine Wissler hails. This "state capitalist" organization supported the imperialist regime-change operation in Syria, celebrated the right-wing coup in Ukraine as a "democratic revolution" in 2014, and has long agitated for a pro-Western "colour" revolution in Russia.

When some prominent representatives of the Left Party, such as former parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht, criticize the NATO offensive against Russia, this is primarily aimed at seeking to control the enormous popular opposition to war and directing it into nationalist channels. The pseudo-left speaks for a faction of the ruling class that sees gas and oil imports from Russia as a crucial prerequisite for a German-European great power policy independent of the United States.

The only party that is fighting German militarism from the left—that is, from the standpoint of the international working class—is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei. In our election appeal, we write that the SGP is making "the re-run of the Berlin election a referendum against this hated and illegitimate policy."

The SGP gives voice to the enormous opposition that no longer finds expression in the official political establishment and provides a socialist perspective placing the needs of working people before the interests of big business. The war cannot be stopped, the social devastation cannot be ended, without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and putting them under democratic control.

This requires building an international working class movement against capitalism and a political reckoning with its militarist defenders in the Left Party.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact