Left Party leader speaks out in favour of arms deliveries to Ukraine

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In the face of growing opposition to NATO's war offensive against Russia and related social attacks, the media is promoting the Left Party and trying to sell it as a force for "peace" and "social justice." Currently, they are providing a platform especially for the party's co-chairman Martin Schirdewan. On Sunday, broadcaster *Deutschlandfunk* and news weekly *Der Spiegel* published extensive interviews with him.

In this, the ruling class has a problem. All efforts to present the Left Party as a political and social alternative are doomed to failure. The party is so conformist and right-wing that workers and young people no longer perceive it as a "left-wing" alternative but increasingly as a political opponent. It has already lost massive numbers of votes in the last federal and state elections and has been booted out of numerous parliaments; it is also predicted to suffer heavy losses in the upcoming Berlin state elections.

Schirdewan's interviews will further reinforce this trend. The Left Party leader left no doubt that he "critically" supports the right-wing and anti-working-class policies of the federal government on all key issues. This was most evident on the issue of war. Schirdewan parroted the official propaganda that Russia was the sole aggressor and spoke out in favour of arms deliveries to Ukraine. He made no mention of NATO's war policy, which has systematically encircled Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and provoked the Russian invasion.

This is not surprising. The Left Party has supported the war course against Russia from the beginning. Leading members—including Thuringia's state Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow and Berlin mayoral candidate Klaus Lederer—openly promote arms deliveries to Kiev. In a situation in which the German government and the other leading NATO powers continue to escalate the proxy war in Ukraine, Schirdewan merely tries to cover up the war policy with a few phrases about "negotiations" and "diplomacy."

Talking to *Deutschlandfunk*, he said, "in the political debate in Germany, but also at the European level," he missed the fact "that there is any thought at all, and real thought, about what leeway there is for negotiations and diplomacy." Then in the same breath, he made it clear that he and his party support the supply of weapons to the Ukrainian army—despite all the Sunday speeches and party conference resolutions.

He said he was "happy to concede, of course, that in the logic of war, the arms deliveries play a role in the defence of Ukraine, of course, because in a war, weapons speak, logically." He also expressed solidarity with the representatives of his party who have long been calling for more and more weapons for Ukraine.

In response to *Deutschlandfunk*'s comment that within the Left Party there were also "those, like Bodo Ramelow among others, who say, yes, sanctions, but also arms deliveries must be possible," Schirdewan replied cynically, "That's internal plurality, because that's how the positions are also found in society and, of course, as a democratic party, we also internally follow democratic decision-making processes that take place in society."

Schirdewan could not sum up the complete bankruptcy of his party more clearly. Every point of view, no matter how right-wing and pro-war, has its place in the Left Party! And indeed, the party is full of militarists who rival even the most slobbering warmongers of the Greens. Recently, for example, in an angry tweet, the state spokesman for the Left Party Youth in Brandenburg, Jonathan Wiegers, called for fighter jets to now be delivered to Ukraine, after the government had agreed to send Leopard battle tanks.

The "diplomatic" initiatives propagated by Schirdewan and the Left Party do not serve a peaceful resolution of the conflict but have two primary goals: They are intended to help impose on Russia the "victors' peace" sought by the NATO powers, and in the process, above all, to strengthen the role of German imperialism. "Pressure must be built up on Vladimir Putin so that he is willing to negotiate," Schirdewan demanded in *Der Spiegel*. "The German government could play an important role there—together with Brazil and China, for example—but it is not doing so."

When Schirdewan criticizes the German government, he

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does so from the standpoint that it is not pursuing German and European interests aggressively enough—especially toward the United States. “We must also define security beyond NATO,” he urged in *Der Spiegel*. “In view of the dangerous political tendencies in the US,” he said, “we have to consider how to become independent.” It was “urgently necessary for Germany, as the largest economy in the EU, to talk to its European partners about how to organize Europe’s security itself.”

Significantly, he stressed to *Deutschlandfunk* that he was “in discussion” with former Left Party parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht—in part to avoid the risk of a party split. “Ideas of founding a new party” he considers “wrong” and “for the party, actually not effective, but harmful.”

Wagenknecht, who has long flirted with founding her own party, is the most prominent representative of that section of the Left Party which rejects the NATO offensive against Russia from the standpoint of German and European imperialism. “It would be right if the Europeans were more mindful of their own interests, both economically and militarily,” she recently told *Der Spiegel*. Otherwise, there was “the danger that Europe will be ground down between the United States on the one hand and Russia and China on the other.”

When Schirdewan rejects a party split with reference to “our common social responsibility,” he is not only concerned with the enforcement of these great power aspirations. He also fears above all that a weakened Left Party will be even less able to control the growing social and political opposition and prevent it from taking the form of an independent movement against the capitalist system.

Schirdewan’s demands for “inflation compensation,” “redistribution,” and more state intervention “in the area of public services” are informed by this fear. But by now, everyone knows that even the social phrases of the Left Party are not worth the paper they are written on. Wherever it (co-) governs at state level, it carries out the fiercest social attacks, privatization and organizes redistribution from those at the bottom to those at the top.

This is most evident in the capital itself. Between 2002 and 2011, the Left Party and its predecessor, the misnamed Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), together with the Social Democrats (SPD) and its far-right finance Senator (state minister) Thilo Sarrazin, had organized unprecedented social cut-backs. Among other things, wages in the public sector were slashed by ten percent, jobs were eliminated *en masse*, and municipally-owned apartments handed over to real estate speculators. The Left Party is currently intensifying this policy in alliance with the SPD and the Greens, the parties of welfare cuts and war.

The deeply anti-working class character of the Left Party is ultimately rooted in its social and political orientation, and history. Despite its name, it is not a left-wing or even socialist organization, but a bourgeois party that defends the interests of the capitalist state and wealthy upper middle-class layers. Its Stalinist predecessors, the Socialist Unity Party (SED, then the PDS), initiated the reintroduction of capitalism in the former East Germany and thus created the preconditions for the social counterrevolution and return of German militarism that have since followed.

There is only one way to stop this. Workers and youth who want to fight against war and the related policy of social devastation must settle political accounts with the Left Party and build the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP). The SGP is the only party that opposes the war parties and gives a voice and a socialist perspective to the growing opposition among workers and youth. Its election statement for the Berlin state elections reads:

> The only social force that can prevent another world war is the international working class—that is, the vast majority of the world’s population, which is now larger and more interconnected than ever before. The SGP, together with its sister parties in the Fourth International, is building a worldwide socialist movement against war and its root cause, capitalism. War cannot be stopped without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and putting them under democratic control.
>
> - Stop the NATO war in Ukraine! No sanctions and arms deliveries!
> - Two world wars are enough! Stop the warmongers!
> - 100 billion euros for kindergartens, schools and hospitals instead of armaments and war!

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