

Peace demonstration in Berlin: A bankrupt perspective

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3 October 2024

Around 10,000 people took part in a nationwide peace demonstration in Berlin on 3 October, German Unity Day, under the slogan “No to Wars.” The call for the demonstration came from a broad alliance of more than 3,000 groups and individuals, dominated by the Left Party and the anti-migrant Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW). Less than a year after the two parties split, they were once again working together harmoniously.

The participants were largely older, including many veterans of the peace movement of the early 1980s and the 2003 protests against the Iraq war. Only the Greens, who have since become the leading German warmongering party, were absent. Participants under the age of 50 were hard to find. The organisers had apparently made no effort to attract young people to the demonstration—nor would they have been able to.

This is due to the bankruptcy of their perspective. The rally did not pursue the goal of building a broad movement against the warmongers in Berlin and Washington, but of preventing such a movement and covering the back of the federal government.

While Germany, together with the US, is ruthlessly escalating the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and crossing every red line, the speakers at the rally limited themselves to hollow pacifist phrases and moral appeals. They fuelled the illusion that the government could be dissuaded from its war course in this way. “Ceasefire, negotiations, diplomacy” were the keywords repeated one after the other.

Not one of them addressed the causes and driving forces behind the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, which are threatening humanity with a nuclear catastrophe: the bankruptcy of capitalism and the struggle of the imperialist powers, above all the US and Germany, for hegemony and the subjugation of Russia,

the Middle East and China.

The first speaker was Gesine Löttsch, a leading member of the Left Party, which fundamentally supports the German government’s pro-war course in Ukraine and the Middle East. Löttsch ranted for six minutes about peace in general, without mentioning the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East even once.

While she complained that tanks cost too much and pollute the environment due to high fuel consumption, and called for the share price of the tank manufacturer Rheinmetall to be sent into the basement, she marched together with party colleagues behind a banner reading “Russia must leave Ukraine.” Zelensky, Scholz and Biden would agree with that.

But it got even worse. The next speaker was Social Democratic Party (SPD) politician Ralf Stegner, who aggressively defended the German government’s arms deliveries to Ukraine and its support for Israel, claiming that the SPD was also part of the peace movement. That was too much, even for the most tolerant participants. Stegner’s contribution was met with whistles and boos.

But the rally organisers insisted on letting him finish. Sahra Wagenknecht also explicitly praised Stegner’s “courage” in speaking at the rally, even though she did not agree with all of his statements.

Next to speak was Peter Gauweiler, who is on the right wing of the Bavarian CSU and supports Donald Trump. The 75-year-old confessed that this was the first time in his life that he had spoken at a peace rally. He explicitly praised his political mentor Franz Josef Strauss, who, as defense minister in the 1950s, wanted to arm the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons and later had to resign because of the Spiegel scandal. Gauweiler claimed that Strauss and the Christian Democratic Union’s (CDU) Chancellor Helmut Kohl had always adhered to the German constitution and rejected

international deployments of the Bundeswehr. He received thunderous applause.

Sahra Wagenknecht followed Gauweiler. She and her husband Oskar Lafontaine have been personal friends of Gauweiler for years. She explicitly praised Mikhail Gorbachev, who made German unity possible 34 years ago with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the former East Germany. She did not mention that this also marked the beginning of the resurgence of German imperialism.

As usual, Wagenknecht made a lot of noise with little substance. She railed against Green Party Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who had called the BSW a “security risk” because of its election successes. In reality, Baerbock was the security risk, she said. “We don’t want to be forced into wars.” She was outraged by the “double standards” that condemned Putin’s war of aggression against Ukraine but not the American wars of aggression against Iraq and other countries.

She complained about the lack of empathy for the Palestinian and Iranian war victims, which she said was inhuman. She explained that terrorists cannot be stopped by terror. She called for “braggarts of warfare”—such as Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (FDP), Anton Hofreiter (Greens) and Norbert Röttgen (CDU—to be sent to the front as fighters, so that they would experience war first-hand.

But she did not go beyond calling for a little more diplomacy. It is obvious that despite her current electoral successes, Wagenknecht does not lead an anti-war movement and does not want to. She is much more concerned with stabilising capitalist rule. That is why she is conducting exploratory talks with the one-hundred-percent supporters of the war, the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, in Thuringia, Saxony and Brandenburg, about joint state governments.

Salah Abdel-Shafi, who represents the Palestinian Authority at the UN, which is involved in Israeli crimes up to its neck, spoke via video.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) distributed a statement—“Fighting against war means fighting capitalism!”—at the demonstration, which says:

It is the profound international crisis of capitalism that is driving the imperialist powers

to war. Private ownership of the means of production and the nation-state system, on which capitalism is based, are incompatible with the international character of modern production, which unites millions of workers around the world in a single social process. The hunt for profits, markets and raw materials by the big corporations and banks can no longer be settled by peaceful methods, as was already the case in the First and Second World Wars. The wars in the Middle East and Ukraine are part of a global struggle for the redivision of the world.

Berlin and Washington are not satisfied with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reintroduction of capitalism. They also want to split apart Russia and gain unrestricted control over its vast raw materials, a goal already pursued by Hitler. That is why NATO has continued to expand eastward, until Putin reacted with a reactionary and desperate attack on Ukraine. He hoped this would force NATO to the negotiating table, but it achieved the opposite.

The only way to stop the wars and avert catastrophe is to mobilise the international working class—those who create all of society’s wealth and are hardest hit by the pro-war policy—against capitalism.



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