

Left Party leader Gregor Gysi calls for unity with the warmongers

Peter Schwarz
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A week ago, the outgoing Bundestag (parliament) approved the largest rearmament programme since Hitler's Nazi regime. The parliament that had been voted out on February 23 met again in blatant disregard for the election result and passed a constitutional amendment enabling the incoming government to procure loans of up to one trillion euros for the expansion of a war-ready infrastructure, rearmament and war.

On Tuesday, the new Bundestag met for the first time. As its oldest member, the founder and long-time leader of the Left Party, Gregor Gysi, gave the opening speech. The Left Party had made surprising gains in the February election because it had spoken out critically about rearmament, the social crisis and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Among young voters and in some cities, such as Berlin, it even became the strongest party.

But anyone who had expected Gysi to criticise the new government's war programme, call for resistance to it or at least announce systematic parliamentary opposition to it was in for a surprise. Not only does the best-known leader of the Left Party agree with all the premises and goals of the pro-war policy, he also emphatically called on the Bundestag to close ranks against any opposition to it. During his speech, he repeatedly received applause from representatives of all factions—including members of the fascist AfD.

Gysi's speech was characterised throughout by the concern that the population would, as he literally said, "lose confidence in established politics"—that is, lose confidence in the parties that are driving Germany back into war and are responsible for social cuts and growing poverty.

Even if this has always been their role, it is rare for a Left Party politician to state so clearly that the party

sees its role not as opposition to the ruling class, but as a safety valve that keeps the pressure in the boiler under control so that it does not endanger those in power.

Gysi began his speech by declaring his agreement with NATO's goals in Ukraine. "We all hopefully agree that Russia is waging a war against Ukraine that is contrary to international law," he said. "We must condemn this. We need a new security structure, a new peace order for Europe."

According to Gysi, those who advocated massive rearmament and those "who see it differently" all wanted the same thing: namely, "peace." Therefore, the proponents of rearmament should not be called "warmongers," because "they want to secure peace in their way." Conversely, the proponents of rearmament should not call the minority in the Bundestag, which advocated de-escalation, more diplomacy and mutual disarmament, "Putin's servants." Because "they too are concerned with nothing more than peace."

So, it is not a matter of stopping the gigantic rearmament programme that threatens Europe with nuclear destruction, but about legitimising this through meaningless talk. "So, there are different views on how to achieve peace. We simply have to learn to respect that these differences exist," said Gysi.

So, if the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens believe that peace can only be achieved through military victory over Russia, we must "simply learn" to respect this suicidal madness!

In the Middle East, too, Gysi backs the policy of the establishment parties, which support the genocide against the Palestinians and persecute and suppress any opposition to it. Jews had "a right to a Jewish state," he stressed. Israel must "be and become sovereign, independent and secure." Not a word of criticism of the

extreme right-wing Israeli government and the systematic murder and expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians by the Israeli army and fascist settlers!

As if it concerned a dispute between two property owners and not a genocide, Gysi added, “We must also think of the Palestinians. They also have a right to a home. ... We must therefore intensify our international efforts to promote the two-state solution.”

Gysi is particularly concerned that anger and outrage over the government’s war and austerity policies will intensify. That is why the call for closing ranks and reconciliation among all parties runs like a red thread through his speech. He did not once mention by name the AfD, which represents almost a quarter of the 630 members of the new Bundestag.

It began with the bizarre suggestion that the left should support renaming streets after Otto von Bismarck (the author of the anti-Socialist Laws) and conservatives the renaming of streets after Clara Zetkin or Karl Marx.

In a long passage of his speech, Gysi proposed the creation of several “non-partisan committees for the Bundestag” to “discuss certain issues openly, honestly and without the public, and then, if they come up with any conclusions, present the results to the public.”

In other words, social cuts and other controversial issues—Gysi mentions the future of pensions, tax policy, health insurance and the reduction of bureaucracy—should first be worked out behind the scenes by representatives of all parties instead of being openly debated and then presented to the public as a *fait accompli*.

Gysi called on Federal President Steinmeier, who was sitting in the gallery, to “set up a committee to address the issue of safeguarding democracy, freedom and the rule of law.” This body should include members of various parliaments, representatives of trade unions, employers’ associations, churches and religious communities, the judiciary, the media, culture and science. “We must succeed,” said Gysi, “despite the enormous pressure mentioned, in the interests of the citizens of our country, to secure the foundations of our constitution for all time.”

Gysi’s proposals sometimes slid into the banal and absurd, for example when he cited five different sales taxes for Christmas trees as an example of the “tax

confusion” to be overcome. But his efforts to keep controversy out of the public eye so as not to encourage social opposition were unmistakable.

Towards the end of his speech, Gysi addressed remarks about President Donald Trump, who was terminating “his economic and military alliance obligations” and was no longer willing “to be responsible for Germany’s security.” He drew the same conclusion from this as the CDU, SPD and Greens do to justify their massive rearmament programme: Europe must become a world power in its own right under German leadership.

“If the European Union really worked,” said Gysi, it could “become a kind of fourth world power” alongside the US, China and Russia. “But I have my doubts that all member states will go along with this. Nevertheless, we must work on it, perhaps some states must move forward.”

Those, like the WSWs and its predecessor publications, who have followed Gysi’s political career for decades are not surprised by his speech. The son of high-ranking Stalinist party functionaries, Gysi took over the chairmanship of East Germany’s state party in late 1989 to support the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic. He and the parties he has led have always acted as staunch defenders of capitalism. Now called Die Linke/Left Party, there is nothing “left” about its politics.

In state governments, the Left Party has cut public sector jobs and social spending just as radically as all the other parties. Gysi’s actions also make it clear that the Left Party’s vote supporting the war loans in the Bundesrat (upper house of parliament), which caused considerable unrest within the party, was no mistake.

The struggle against rearmament, war, social cuts and fascism requires the development of an independent movement of the international working class, fighting for the socialisation of big business and the banks and the construction of a socialist society. The Left Party is trying to systematically prevent this.



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