

Left Party conference hides support for Merz government with left-wing rhetoric

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The recent Left Party conference in Chemnitz has clearly demonstrated its role as the graveyard of every social movement from below. While resolutions and speeches were not short on radical rhetoric aimed at appealing to radicalised young people and workers, they remained deliberately vague in order to cover up the party's right-wing *realpolitik* and enable further collaboration with the federal and state governments.

When hundreds of thousands spontaneously took to the streets in February to protest against the cooperation of the current chancellor, Friedrich Merz (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), with the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Left Party was able to benefit from this. Because it was the only party that had not participated in the anti-refugee propaganda and had at least nominally opposed rearmament and war, it not only received over 4 million votes, but also gained tens of thousands of new, mostly young members.

But the Left Party did not mobilise this opposition to fascism and war; it stifled it. When it became clear on election night that Merz, together with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), would form the most right-wing government since Hitler, it did not call for mass demonstrations, but announced it wanted to negotiate cooperation with them. Finally, the party even approved the new government's €1 trillion rearmament programme in the Bundesrat (upper house of parliament) and then enabled Merz's swift election as chancellor in the Bundestag (lower house of parliament).

This course was continued at the recent party conference. There had been no new elections of delegates in the run-up to the conference, so the vast majority of members who had only joined in recent months were not represented at all. The meeting of the old delegates was then choreographed from start to finish, so that no serious discussion of any pressing issues could take place.

The conference was repeatedly interrupted by musical acts, and after the main speeches, disco fog was sprayed and the hall bathed in red flashing lights several times. The spectacle was more reminiscent of a village disco in the 1990s than a serious political event under conditions of acute war, genocide in Gaza and historic attacks on wages and jobs.

This was a conscious decision. The festive atmosphere was intended to allow the party executive and presidium to prevent

any controversial debate on these issues and to push through resolutions enabling the continuation of their right-wing policies while sounding "left."

To this end, the "unity" of the party was invoked like a mantra, and the need to focus on certain issues was emphasised.

But this did not include the preparations for war against the nuclear power Russia, the Israeli genocide of the Palestinians and the growing conflicts between the imperialist powers. None of the main contributions from the party and parliamentary group leadership even mentioned these central developments. Terms such as Russia, Ukraine, Gaza or world war are also nowhere to be found in the main resolution.

Instead, there was only talk of "rearmament," which they opposed. However, this "rearmament" was not linked to Germany's war preparations against Russia or the global ambitions of German imperialism. The Left Party even claimed that the government was pursuing "rearmament for the sake of rearmament," as if Merz and Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) had not openly declared that they want to be capable of winning a war against Russia within three to five years.

While the main motion sidesteps any concrete political developments, it is brimming with left-wing phrases that are in no way concrete or binding. For example, the Left Party repeatedly describes itself as an "organising class party" or a "socialist membership party" that must root itself in the "working class," etc.

None of this prevents the party leadership from supporting the federal government's pro-war policies, enabling Merz's quick election as chancellor, or supporting deportations and social attacks in the federal states. These phrases serve only to tie young people who are looking for a socialist alternative to this thoroughly right-wing party and thus nip genuine resistance in the bud.

This is particularly evident in the resolutions that were tabled on specific issues, most of which had been formally merged by the party executive from several individual motions.

The motion "Without ifs and buts: Say no to rearmament and military preparedness!" sharply criticises the federal government's war credits, which the Left Party had itself approved in the Bundesrat.

Unlike at the last conference in Halle, the party now also

explicitly opposes “arms deliveries to Ukraine.” Finally, it even states: “The Left Party stands in the tradition of the two anti-militarists Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.”

The two great revolutionaries must be turning in their graves. They were known for calling a spade a spade, relentlessly exposing the machinations of German militarism and mobilising the working class against the root cause of war: capitalism.

The Left Party’s resolution, however, makes no mention of NATO’s provocation against Russia, the role of the German government in fuelling the war, or the great power ambitions of the ruling class. Everything is reduced to a general “power struggle between major powers over geopolitical interests, raw materials and markets,” but Germany is not named as one of these major powers. On the contrary, the resolution demands that the country pursue an “independent policy of détente in Europe.”

In doing so, the Left Party is not simply fuelling the illusion that a peaceful world is possible under capitalist conditions and that the ruling class can be persuaded to pursue a “policy of détente.” Rather, the party uses these phrases to integrate itself into the official pro-war politics.

Just three days after the conference, on the Maischberger talk show, party leader Jan van Aken enthusiastically welcomed Chancellor Merz’s trip to Kiev. “It was right that he went to Kiev together with Tusk, Starmer and Macron as his first action,” said van Aken. “That was exactly the right move. We have been saying for three years that more needs to be done for negotiations, and they have finally taken the reins again.” Van Aken was delighted that the four politicians had undermined US President Donald Trump’s dirty deals with Putin.

After supporting the quick election of the new chancellor, the Left Party is now celebrating his efforts to outmanoeuvre Trump and bring Ukraine under European control. Merz’s meeting in Kiev is not aimed at securing peace, but rather the escalation of the war against Russia, to which the chancellor even wants to provide Taurus cruise missiles to attack deep into the Russian heartland.

It is also noteworthy in this context that although the resolution describes the party’s approval of the war credits in the Bundesrat as “wrong,” another motion calling for the resignation of the responsible ministers and senators failed to gain a majority. There is no better way to sum up the fact that these radical phrases are nothing more than fig leaves for the party’s right-wing policies.

The same applies to the resolution “Stop expulsions and famine in Gaza—implement international law!” It calls for the implementation of the international arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a “(complete) withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza.” A “renewed military occupation and the resettlement of the entire population” must be prevented through international pressure.

But these are nothing more than lip service since the party

reaffirmed the resolution passed at its previous conference in Halle, which invoked Israel’s right to “self-defence.” In its current motion, the party also describes the armed resistance of Palestinians against their decades of oppression as “terrorism” and calls for a ceasefire on both sides.

The Left Party continues to refuse to call genocide by its name. It also reaffirmed that anyone who denies the Israeli apartheid regime’s right to exist and advocates a joint, secular state with equal rights for all cannot be an ally of the Left Party.

In view of this clear identification with the oppressive Zionist regime, the Left Party’s criticism of the Israeli government’s atrocities is no different from the German government’s empty warnings when it signs the next arms deal.

Overall, the hoopla and left-wing rhetoric could not conceal the right-wing character of the party. In her opening speech, the state chairwoman of the Left Party in Saxony stated that the party must act as a “responsible opposition,” as it was already doing in Saxony by supporting the CDU-SPD state executive on a vote-by-vote basis. “What we don’t need now is this silly game of eeny, meeny, miny, moe, I’m much more left-wing than you,” she shouted to the applause of the delegates.

The former Left Party state premier of Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow, used his speech to promote an alliance with the reactionary Catholic Church because in his inaugural speech Pope Leo XIV had said the same thing “as the Left Party in Germany.”

This sums up the character of the party conference. Like the Vatican, the Left Party stands to the right and only spouts left-wing phrases when it comes to stifling a movement from below and cutting it off from a genuinely socialist perspective.

Anyone who seriously wants to fight against war and fascism cannot do so in this degenerate party.

What is needed is a genuinely socialist perspective that opposes the policy of war and growing nationalism with the international unity of workers in the struggle against capitalism. This perspective is embodied by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and its sister parties of the Fourth International.



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