

Germany's Left Party fuels the NATO war on Russia

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Following the recent Ukraine summits in Alaska and Washington, Germany's Left Party is increasingly openly supporting the right-wing Zelensky regime and advocating aggressive imperialist war against Russia. Its co-leader, Jan van Aken, has used interviews with public broadcasters ARD and ZDF in recent days to attack the federal government from the right and demand that Germany assert its interests even more decisively against Russia—and also against the US.

Anyone who still harbours illusions about the Left Party's supposed "peace policy" should study van Aken's recent appearances closely. They reveal the party for what it is: a central component of the war front, using pseudo-left rhetoric to rally the population behind militarism, sanctions, and continued confrontation with Russia.

Blue helmets as an instrument of war

On Tuesday's Morgenmagazin on ZDF, van Aken said the debate in Berlin and Brussels was "tunnel-visioned" and focused only on putting NATO troops in Ukraine. He said this carried "the very real danger that even after a peace deal or ceasefire, NATO troops would be directly facing Russian soldiers," which could lead to a "major war."

But instead of drawing the only logical conclusion—an immediate halt to NATO escalation and the withdrawal of all Western weapons and troops—van Aken merely proposed another model that essentially amounts to the same confrontation: a UN peacekeeping mission.

He sells this as less "risky" and as a kind of peace mission. But this is pure window dressing. Anyone familiar with the history of such missions—from the Balkans to Africa—knows that in practice, "peacekeeping forces" always serve to secure the interests of the imperialist powers that send them. In the event of conflict, the colour of the helmets would simply be relabelled, and a supposed "peace mission" would become a direct military intervention.

Demand for "robust security guarantees"

Van Aken more or less admitted this himself. When asked whether Ukraine needs "robust" security guarantees, he replied without hesitation: "Absolutely. Ukraine cannot rely on a piece of paper...It must be tangible."

This is nothing less than a demand for a military protective shield—in other words, a permanent Western military presence in Ukraine. In this way, the Left Party is not opposing imperialist war plans, but supporting them. Its criticism is not directed against the escalation, but merely serves to conceal it in order to push it forward all the more aggressively.

Tougher sanctions and right-wing criticism of Merz

Van Aken was even more blunt in the ARD summer interview on Sunday evening. There, he attacked Chancellor Friedrich Merz from the right. While Merz is trying to maintain transatlantic solidarity with the US for as long as possible despite growing differences, van Aken accused him of not acting decisively enough.

He was outraged that Trump treated Zelensky "like a piece of dirt" and courted Putin. Therefore, according to van Aken, Ukraine can no longer rely on the US. The conclusion: Europe, i.e. Germany, must act more confidently and assert its interests in Ukraine independently.

His call for tougher sanctions against Russia underscores this line of attack. While millions of workers in Germany are already suffering from skyrocketing energy prices and inflation, van Aken complained that the federal government is doing "nothing to prevent illegal oil exports from passing almost directly through our territory." He said it is high time to stop the tankers "carrying illegal Russian oil," as they are constantly pouring money into the "Russian war chest." Van Aken wants to intensify the economic war against Russia even more drastically—at the expense of the population.

Pro-imperialist orientation

This exposes the Left Party for what it has always been: not a "peace party," but an integral part of German imperialism. Its criticism of the federal government is not aimed at ending the war, but at making it even more consistent and "independent" in the interests of German great power politics. Not only against Russia, but also against the US.

Van Aken condemned the "territorial concessions" to Russia brought into play by Trump, not because he rejects an escalation of the war, but because he wants to prevent the division of Ukraine over the heads of Europe. In truth, he demands that Berlin and Brussels actively sit at the table in the redivision of the world and assert their interests.

"We on the left have been saying for a long time that we must think more and more European when it comes to security," van Aken emphasised in an earlier interview with Deutschlandfunk. We must "prepare ourselves for defence" in order to "act more as a neutral, major power, as a force for peace, so to speak." We must not "throw ourselves at the US or Russia or anyone else," but must "act independently."

When Gregor Gysi, figurehead and founding father of the Left Party, opened the new Bundestag (German parliament) as its longest-serving member, he summed up his party's support for a European superpower policy led by Germany: "If the European Union really worked," it could become "a kind of fourth world power" alongside the US, China, and

Russia. This would require “work,” according to Gysi, and perhaps “some states would have to take the lead.”

Trump, Russia and the war against China

Recent developments have not only triggered an enormous crisis for European governments and their pseudo-left supporters, but have also further fuelled their claim to play an independent role as a great power and military force.

As the WSWS pointed out in a recent statement, Trump’s change of direction in US geostrategy toward Russia has nothing to do with a policy of peace. He is pursuing two goals: first, to gain access to Russia’s vast raw material reserves and markets over the heads of the Europeans; second, to create space for the real main front from the standpoint of US imperialism—the escalation of the war against China.

The alternative proposed by van Aken and the Left Party, in line with influential figures in politics and the media—a tougher, more independent line for Germany and Europe—means nothing less than drumming up support for an independent militaristic strategy for German imperialism. While Washington is trying to draw Russia into an anti-China alliance, Berlin is determined to assert its position in Eastern Europe and secure its own spheres of influence.

The return of German militarism

It is necessary to speak openly about what this means. Eighty years after the downfall of the Nazis, German imperialism—supported by the Left Party—is once again pursuing a policy of world power and continued confrontation with Russia. The constant propaganda in the political establishment and the media about an impending Russian invasion of the whole of Europe corresponds to the lies of German imperialism on the eve of the First and Second World Wars.

The same applies to the interests involved. Already in World War I, control of Ukraine, rich in raw materials and geostrategically important, was one of the central war aims of the German Empire, alongside the pursuit of German hegemony in “Central Europe.” In World War II, Hitler continued to pursue these goals. Ukraine played a key role in the war of extermination against the Soviet Union, which culminated in the Holocaust and cost the lives of at least 27 million Soviet citizens.

Even today, German imperialism is not concerned with “security” or “peace.” Rather, it is once again pursuing the goal of removing Ukraine and other states that formerly belonged to the Soviet Union or the Tsarist Empire from Russia’s sphere of influence and bringing them under the control of the German-dominated EU. In addition, it is about enforcing historical attacks on the working class, establishing a police state at home in order to finance rearmament and push it through against enormous opposition among the population.

Support for the Merz government

Here, too, van Aken leaves no doubt that the Left Party is ready to support the reactionary agenda of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and SPD. In response to the interviewer’s

remark that the Left Party “supported a second round of voting for Friedrich Merz in the chancellor election with its parliamentary group,” van Aken assured that he would continue to support the governing parties “if they do the right thing.” However, he said, they had not “really done the right thing so far,” and therefore it was necessary to continue to exert “pressure.”

In fact, the first months of the Merz government have made it abundantly clear that it cannot be pressured to pursue left-wing policies. Rather, it is responding to the enormous opposition among the population with an aggressive right-wing offensive and the adoption of far-right AfD policies in all areas—militarisation, waging war, anti-refugee agitation, social attacks and the buildup of a police state. The Left Party is in reality part of this shift to the right and therefore plays the role of repeatedly steering the growing resistance behind the Merz government and suppressing any independent opposition in close cooperation with the trade union bureaucracy.

When its leaders, such as van Aken, express a certain social criticism, it is from the standpoint of the wealthy middle classes, who vehemently defend capitalism and are merely dissatisfied with the unequal distribution of wealth at the top of society. “I have nothing against wealth at all,” van Aken made clear to ARD. “Let’s be honest, we all want to be rich in some way. I always think, if someone gave me two million now, a hammock on the beach, I’d be fine with that.” But “at a certain point,” it becomes “outrageous.”

The roots of the Left Party as a capitalist party of war

It is important to understand that the reactionary policies of the Left Party—its approval of the Merz government’s war credits, its support for imperialist wars, its carrying out of social spending cuts and strengthening of the apparatus of state repression at the state level—stem directly from its social orientation and history. In a lecture at Humboldt University entitled “How the Left Party supports the Merz government’s war policy,” the author of this article explained:

The party’s militarism is not the accidental product of individual right-wing functionaries. It is an expression of the social and political foundations on which this party has always stood. Despite its name, the Left Party has never been a left-wing or socialist party. It has always been a bourgeois organisation—a party that defends the interests of the state apparatus and privileged middle classes, supports German capitalism, and is rewarded for this with ministerial posts and millions in state party funding.

For a socialist perspective against war

Workers and youth in Germany, Europe, and internationally must recognise that there is no parliamentary alternative to war and militarism. The struggle against war requires a break with the Left Party and similar pseudo-left formations, which in their Sunday speeches foster illusions in the reformability of capitalism, but in practice support every reactionary development, no matter how extreme. It requires the building of an independent movement of the international working class that will attack the social roots of war and imperialism: capitalism itself.

Only a socialist perspective, which organises production according to

the needs of humanity rather than the profits of a small elite, can stop the return of German militarism to the world stage and save the world from a third, nuclear world war. The Socialist Equality Parties affiliated with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and their youth and student organisation, the IYSSE, are fighting for this perspective.



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