

By abstaining on the pensions package, Germany's Left Party supports the reactionary policies of the Merz government

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The announcement by the Left Party (Die Linke) that it would abstain in Friday's Bundestag (parliament) vote on the pensions package of the Merz government, thereby ensuring its adoption, exposes it once again as a pro-capitalist party loyal to the state. Confronted with growing social and political opposition in Germany and across Europe, it is doing everything it can to keep in office the most right-wing government since the founding of the Federal Republic—a government that is rearming Germany on a scale not seen since Hitler, organising massive social attacks, implementing the policies of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) and thus paving its way into government.

The Left Party tries to cloak its support for Merz in social phraseology. “We will not accept that pension levels are pushed down even further,” declared faction leader Heidi Reichinnek. The introduction of a “guard rail” should not fail because of her party, she said—referring to the government's plan to continue the expired minimum pension level of 48 percent until 2031.

A brief look at reality shows how cynical this justification is. In view of massive price increases and continuing inflation, this “guard rail” amounts to a cut. Germany's pension level is already among the lowest in Europe and will continue to fall in the coming years—not despite, but because of the pensions package, which explicitly aims to make the social devastation more inevitable.

Merz was forced to push the package through the coalition against growing resistance from business associations and from within his own ranks. Above all, the business wing and employer lobby groups are demanding far quicker and deeper attacks: abolishing the option of deduction-free early retirement at 63, introducing further deductions for early retirement, and raising the retirement age beyond 67.

Within the government, the 18 deputies of the Young Group openly threatened to vote against the package, thereby endangering the majority of the coalition

government of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD). In this critical situation, the Left Party stepped in to support Merz—in full knowledge that it was rescuing a government preparing an unprecedented assault on social rights.

This is not a “mistake” or tactical contortion, but a deliberate policy that corresponds to the political DNA of the Left Party: whenever the reactionary measures of the ruling class meet popular resistance, Die Linke / Left Party dutifully lines up behind the government and the state apparatus.

The anti-working class and reactionary character of this collaboration can only be understood against the backdrop of the social and political offensive of German imperialism.

Barely a week ago the government adopted the 2026 budget—the largest war budget since the fall of the Third Reich. At over €108 billion and still rising, it breaks all previous limits and drives militarisation forward with unprecedented speed. The logic of the budget is clear: the hundreds of billions flowing into armaments must be clawed back from the population through social cuts.

The pensions plans are therefore not isolated, but part of a social counterrevolution. The assault on pensions, healthcare, care provision, basic welfare and wages is one of the domestic pillars of Germany's new great-power policy. And the Left Party demonstratively stands behind it.

The Left Party's support also comes at a moment when the Merz government is consciously acting as a springboard for the fascist AfD. Merz already cooperated with the AfD ahead of the last federal elections. Now the coalition led by him, together with the SPD, is organising mass deportations, sharply expanding the police and intelligence agencies and adopting open Nazi rhetoric—such as Merz's agitation about refugees “disfiguring” the “urban environment.”

The new budget even includes a direct bridge to the far right: €250,000 [\$US291,000] are being channelled to the right-wing think tank “Republik 21” (R21), founded by

former Merz adviser Andreas Rödder and former Family Minister Kristina Schröder (CDU)—a project that officially seeks “dialogue” with the AfD and is preparing its political integration at federal level.

That the Left Party supports Merz in parliament under these conditions reveals its true character. It is not a bulwark against fascism and militarism, but the political lubricant for strengthening the far right and implementing its agenda.

On March 21, it supported the largest rearmament package since Hitler in the Bundesrat (upper chamber of parliament)—even though its votes were not needed. The Left Party’s Reichinnek declared at the time that the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) had to be “adequately equipped” and that her party was ready “to discuss calmly what the Bundeswehr needs.”

On May 6, when Merz failed to win the vote in the Bundestag for chancellor in the first round, the Left Party helped ensure that the second round was held on the same day, so securing Merz as chancellor. Left Party leader Bodo Ramelow boasted that this had been done “to protect democracy.” In reality, it helped secure the interests of German capitalism and imperialism and install a government that is greatly intensifying war, repression and social cuts.

The Left Party is now playing the same role again. The massive rearmament spending and preparations for war are meeting growing opposition within the population. Across Europe strikes and protests are developing—in Belgium and Italy, where multi-day general strikes took place last week, in France, and increasingly in Germany, where pupils took strike action on Friday nationwide against military conscription.

With its support for Merz, the Left Party is trying to break the momentum of this insurgency. It fears any independent movement of the working class more than it fears the fascists and is prepared to ally with the most reactionary forces to block and suppress a socialist working class movement.

In his speech on the war budget, Left Party spokeswoman Dietmar Bartsch warned that its size placed “an explosive charge under social cohesion.” This summarises the role of the Left Party: it fears a social explosion. That is why it again strengthens the government.

Pseudo-left forces play the same role around the world. The election victory of Zohran Mamdani in New York reflects the leftward shift of workers and youth in the heart of world imperialism. But Mamdani and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), to which he belongs, have since worked feverishly with the Democratic Party machine, Wall Street boardrooms and the state apparatus to recapture and suppress the political anger that propelled him into office. The provisional climax of this effort was Mamdani’s

repulsive and humiliating subordination to the fascist President Donald Trump in the Oval Office on November 21.

How is this rightward shift of pseudo-left forces to be explained? Regarding the Left Party, we wrote in an earlier analysis:

Despite its name, the Left Party has never been a socialist or even left-wing party. It has always been a bourgeois organisation representing the interests of the state apparatus and a wealthy upper-middle-class strata, defending German capitalism and imperialism and being rewarded for this with ministerial posts and state subsidies running into the millions.

None of the Left Party’s verbiage can hide the fact that its predecessor organisation, the Stalinist party of state in the former East Germany (SED/PDS), supported the introduction of capitalist relations there, thereby laying the foundations for the return of German militarism and fascism.

Young people who voted for the Left Party in the federal election to express their opposition to militarism and fascism must confront this reality. The Left Party is not only not fighting against these evils; it actively supports rearmament, a pro-war policy and the accompanying social cuts, imposing them against growing resistance.

There is only one clear conclusion. Anyone who wants to fight war, rearmament, fascism and social devastation needs a completely different perspective from the servile grovelling of the Left Party. It is necessary to organise opposition independently of all bourgeois parties and the pro-capitalist trade unions tied to them and to develop it based on an international socialist strategy.

The central task here is to build the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP—the German section of the Fourth International) as the revolutionary leadership of the working class. Only on this basis can the war course of German imperialism and the turn of the ruling class—including its “left” representatives—towards fascism and war be halted.



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