Left Party leader offers a prop for Germany's Christian Democrats

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Anyone still needing proof that the Left Party remains a thoroughly establishment, right-wing bourgeois party—even under its new chairman, Luigi Pantisano—need only watch his interview with the national state broadcaster ZDF. Pantisano did not use the nearly 20 minutes to attack the Christian Democrat (CDU)-led government, rearmament or the massive social cuts. Instead, he did everything he could to reassure the ruling class that the Left Party can be relied upon.

The interview resembled a political aptitude test. Diana Zimmermann, head of ZDF's Berlin studio, cross-examined Pantisano on the central questions: Is the Left Party ready to cooperate with the CDU? Does it stand behind the state apparatus? Will it act against opposition within its own ranks? And is it prepared to further adapt its stance on rearmament and war to the requirements of German imperialism?

Zimmermann herself is among the most aggressive propagandists for this policy. Last year, in light of Israel's attack on Iran, she asked Chancellor Friedrich Merz whether it was not "tempting" that Israel was now doing the "dirty work" against the Iranian regime. Merz thanked her for the phrase and made it his own.

The conversation with Pantisano was likewise extremely amicable. And the new Left Party leader passed the test with flying colours. His performance was marked by servility and a demonstrative effort to dispel any suspicion that his party might organise serious opposition to the prevailing policies.

This was clearest with regard to the upcoming state election in Saxony-Anhalt. Asked whether the Left Party would vote for CDU candidate Sven Schulze as State Premier, Pantisano replied: "In recent years, we as the Left Party have shown that we take responsibility for this country. Especially when it comes to preventing the Alternative for Germany from coming to power."

He explicitly did not rule out voting for Schulze. Instead, he called on the CDU to assume this "responsibility" itself.

Only seconds earlier, Pantisano himself had described how far-right MEPs shouted "foreigners out" in the European Parliament while conservative politicians sat beside them and applauded—"including, by the way, CDU/CSU politicians." Nevertheless, he again apologised submissively for his earlier statement that he saw "absolutely no difference at the moment between the CDU, which pursues fascist policies, the AfD or the fascists themselves."

When Zimmermann objected that this had reduced the CDU's willingness to cooperate, Pantisano became almost pleading. It would be "presumptuous" and "petty," he said, to question cooperation over such a remark. After all, "we are all adults" who had to "take responsibility."

The message is unmistakable: Pantisano himself describes how the CDU is adopting the policies and slogans of the extreme right—and immediately afterwards offers it his party's support. The Left Party is not fighting the AfD. It is backing the very parties that pave the way for the AfD, through imposing social cuts, inciting anti-refugee sentiments, militarism and the build-up of the police state, and that adopt the fascists' programme. And it is prepared to implement these policies itself.

The Left Party has long since demonstrated what it understands by "responsibility." On March 21, 2025, the states of Bremen and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, where it was part of the governing coalition, it voted in favour of the largest rearmament package since Hitler in the Bundesrat (upper chamber of the federal parliament), even though their votes were not even needed. Parliamentary group leader Heidi Reichinnek stated that the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) had to be "equipped accordingly" and offered to "calmly discuss what the Bundeswehr needs."

When Merz lost the first round of the parliamentary vote to become chancellor on May 6, 2025, it was the Left Party that helped make a second ballot possible the same day. Bodo Ramelow, the Left Party's former state premier in Thuringia, subsequently boasted that this had protected "democracy." In reality, the party helped install and stabilise Merz's coalition government with the Social Democrats (SPD), which has radically intensified rearmament, social cuts, deportations and the expansion of the state apparatus.

Pantisano personifies the social layer whose interests the Left Party represents. The son of Italian *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers), he rose through vocational training and university study into academic and political institutions. He held scholarships from, among others, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, the Robert Bosch Foundation, the Baden-

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Württemberg Foundation and the German Marshall Fund (a notorious think tank of transatlantic warmongers), and later worked as a research assistant to former party chairman Bernd Riexinger.

What matters here is not his origins but the social layer into which he has integrated himself. His conspicuous servility towards representatives of the ruling class is not simply a personal weakness. It has class roots. Pantisano embodies the affluent, state-affiliated middle layers—officials, academics and trade union bureaucrats—whose social position is firmly bound up with the existing state and party system. Towards the CDU, the government and the state apparatus, they are accommodating and ready to compromise. Towards workers and young people who genuinely want to fight against war and reaction, they show an entirely different and harsh approach.

This was evident in response to Zimmermann's question about alleged "antisemitism" within Linksjugend, the party's youth organisation. She used isolated reactionary remarks as a pretext to cast blanket suspicion on resistance to the genocide in Gaza and to Germany's "state doctrine," i.e., its support for the terror of the far-right Netanyahu regime. Pantisano accepted this framing and assured her that "Islamist" as well as "antisemitic attitudes" had "no place in the Left Party." One of his "very first" meetings as party chairman, he said, had been with members of Linksjugend. He said efforts were under way to get them to "retreat" from such positions; otherwise, consequences would follow.

Pantisano's task is to capture and neutralise any radicalisation of its members, particularly younger ones. Many young people voted for the Left Party or joined it because they reject Merz's cooperation with the AfD, the incitement against refugees, the course towards war, conscription or the Gaza genocide. It is precisely this opposition that is to be channelled back into the safe confines of bourgeois politics.

The same applies to the question of war. On ZDF, Pantisano hypocritically spoke out against further arms deliveries to Ukraine and the gigantic military spending. Yet he did not formulate any principled opposition to the rearmament of German imperialism. Asked about additional investment in drone defence, he said he did not know whether more money was needed for this. That, he said, was for "defence experts" to assess.

In this, he is continuing the line of his predecessors. The Left Party does not fundamentally reject German militarism. Its differences concern form, pace and political packaging. When it counts, it votes for rearmament and lines up behind the interests of the German state.

Equally dishonest is Pantisano's talk of "democratic socialism." Asked by Zimmermann for a real-world model, he cited Vienna because of its high proportion of public housing and comparatively low rents. But that does not make Vienna a socialist city. It is a capitalist metropolis and a major financial and corporate centre. Its housing model shows at most that certain social reforms were possible within capitalism under specific historical conditions—reforms that have long been systematically dismantled.

The best example of this is the policy the Left Party itself carries out when it is in power. While it rails against "rent sharks" and demands their "expropriation" on the campaign trail, in Berlin it directly handed tens of thousands of public housing units over to them. In 2004, the Berlin Senate (state executive), a coalition between the SPD and the PDS, precursor to the Left Party, sold the state-owned GSW (municipal housing authority), with around 65,000 flats, for €405 million to a consortium of Cerberus and Goldman Sachs's Whitehall fund. In other words, the party that today decorates itself with slogans about "public ownership" is the very party that helped turn public housing into an investment vehicle for international finance.

That is the real record of its "socialism." Despite its name, the Left Party has never been a socialist party. Its Stalinist predecessor organisation, the party of state in the former East Germany (SED/PDS), helped restore capitalism there. Wherever it subsequently governed, it has carried out social cuts, privatisation, wage cuts and deportations.

With Bodo Ramelow in Thuringia, it occupied the office of state premier for 10 years. Today, the AfD stands at 40 percent there in the polls. This refutes all talk of the Left Party being a "bulwark against the right." Its combination of left-wing campaign phrases and right-wing government policy has not weakened the extreme right but prepared the ground for it.

Workers and young people must draw the necessary conclusions from this. The Left Party is not an instrument that can be used to fight fascism, social cuts and war. It is a tool of the bourgeois order that is needed precisely when opposition develops within the working class and among young people.

A political reckoning with this party is necessary. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is standing in the Berlin state election with a socialist programme against war, rearmament, social cuts and fascism. It is fighting to organise the growing opposition independently of all the parties of the capitalist system and to build an international socialist movement of the working class.

The ZDF interview has supplied ample illustrative material to substantiate this view. Pantisano is not leading the Left Party to the left. He is promoting it, with social-reformist and anti-fascist phrases, as a reliable pillar of precisely the political order that produces militarism, social devastation and the rise of the extreme right.

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