

War against Russia and sharing the spoils: Left Party supports “Ukraine Recovery Conference”

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“‘General’ enthusiasm over the prospects of imperialism, furious defence of it and painting it in the brightest colours—such are the signs of the times,” declared Lenin in his work *Imperialism*. The dominance of finance capital over all areas of society and the struggle of the great powers for “the division of the world and domination over other countries... cause the propertied classes to go over entirely to the side of imperialism.”

The role of Germany’s Left Party today could not be more aptly described. Under conditions in which the imperialist powers are once again plunging the world into the abyss, organising genocide in the Middle East and escalating the NATO war against Russia, the Left Party stands entirely on “the side of imperialism.” This was expressed particularly clearly at the so-called “Ukraine Recovery Conference” in Berlin. Leading Left Party politician Dietmar Bartsch was among the participants.

On X (formerly Twitter), Bartsch, the last chairman of the Left Party parliamentary group in the Bundestag boasted about his participation. He posted a picture of his participant card and wrote:

The Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin can and should provide important impetus to support Ukrainians in their everyday lives in parallel with peace efforts. Civil infrastructure, hospitals, electricity, heating: Germany can also do more. Reconstruction loans must not be dictated by Blackrock & Co. but must include fair conditions for Ukraine.

Of course, Bartsch is well aware that the conference was neither about “peace” nor about civilian “recovery” in the interests of the Ukrainian population. The conference, which according to the German government was attended by more than 2,000 people from over 60 countries, had two primary objectives: to mobilise further military support for the escalation of the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and to divide up the spoils of war among the imperialist powers.

We are “pulling out all the stops to ensure that Ukraine will soon be sitting with us at the table of our European Union,” explained German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) at the conference. The aim of the reconstruction conference is to “join forces with many partners from politics, business, civil society and local authorities to give Kiev all the support it needs on its path to reform and recovery.” The support is “comprehensive: economic, humanitarian, political and with the delivery of urgently needed weapons.”

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who opened the conference together with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, explained in his opening speech: “Since 24 February 2022, we have provided or pledged 28 billion euros in military support alone. Billions more in civilian support will follow.”

What the Ukrainian army “currently needs most urgently” is “ammunition and weapons, especially for air defence.” That is why Germany is delivering “a third Patriot air defence system to Ukraine in the coming weeks and months, as well as IRIS-T-SLM air defence systems, Gepard anti-aircraft tanks, missiles and artillery ammunition.” He wanted to “sincerely ask everyone here today to support our initiative to strengthen Ukraine’s air defence with everything possible!”

In fact, NATO’s war plans go far beyond the issue of “air defence.” Behind the backs of the population, the military alliance is preparing a direct intervention with NATO ground troops in order to strengthen the exhausted Ukrainian army and attack Russia directly. Prior to the conference, Scholz himself gave the green light for the bombing of Russian targets using German weapons. The nuclear arsenals stationed against Russia and China are also being increased by NATO.

Scholz’s further statements at the conference left no doubt as to the imperialist desires behind the insane escalation of war. “Hundreds of German companies” were already “active in Ukraine, with 35,000 employees in the automotive sector alone,” Scholz boasted. “Compared to the pre-war period,” the volume of German trade had even “increased significantly.” In terms of the “number of new investment guarantees from the German government,” “Ukraine is in first place worldwide” and “the number of members of our Chamber of Foreign Trade in Kyiv increased by over 60 percent last year.”

“All of this shows me that the business community understands Ukraine’s potential,” Scholz continued. “It is a large country with a well-educated population.” “Ukrainian agriculture” was “a global player” and the country also had “great potential ... in renewable energies and hydrogen, but also in emerging sectors such as digitalisation and armaments, healthcare technology and pharmaceuticals.” All of these fields would therefore be “a particular focus at our conference.”

Another “field” is the “battle for raw materials,” according to a paper by the foreign trade agency Germany Trade and Invest (GTAI), which reports to Habeck’s Ministry of Economic Affairs. Ukraine has “large deposits of iron, titanium and lithium, some of which are now controlled by Russia.” The German government’s key points for the

reconstruction conference explicitly call for “stronger integration of Ukraine into the EU’s (raw materials) trade within the framework of the EU Critical Raw Materials Act.”

The conference’s predatory-militaristic programme was worked out in concrete terms in the various panels. In addition to the economic exploitation and plundering of Ukraine, the focus was on strengthening the defence industry and developing local war production.

Under the title “Partnerships to strengthen the Ukrainian arsenal of the future: the Ukrainian defence industry as a key factor for resilience and recovery,” the participants included German Economy Minister Robert Habeck, Minister of Strategic Industries of Ukraine Alexandr Kamyshin, Dutch Prime Minister and future NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Chairman of the Board of the Ukrainian Defence Industry JSC Herman Smetanin, Senior Director Ukraine of BAE Systems Christian Seear and Armin Papperger, chairman of the board of arms manufacturer Rheinmetall.

Just a few days before the conference, the German defence giant, whose shares have skyrocketed since the start of the war, and Kiev had reportedly opened their first joint tank repair facility in Ukraine. At the same time, the company, which made a fortune arming Hitler’s Wehrmacht (army), announced that the new Lynx armoured personnel carrier would also be produced in Ukraine.

The militarisation and plundering of Ukraine are being organised directly by some of the largest corporations and banks. On one panel, German Finance Minister Christina Lindner (Liberal Democrat, FDP), who is currently working on a new war and austerity budget for Germany, discussed the “framework and conditions for economic growth and resilience” in Ukraine with his Ukrainian counterpart Serhiy Marchenko, President of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Nadia Calviño, Deutsche Bank CEO Christian Sewing and the former US secretary of state and board member of telecoms conglomerate VEON and star Kiev player, Mike Pompeo. In other words: the impoverished Ukrainian workers who are not being ground up on the front line are to be exploited even more brutally in the future.

The overall content and thrust of the conference made it clear how aggressively German imperialism in particular is returning to its criminal traditions. As early as the First World War, control of the resource-rich and geostrategically central Ukraine—alongside the establishment of German hegemony over “Central Europe”—was one of the declared war aims of the Kaiser’s empire. Hitler continued this policy in the Second World War. In the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, which led to the Holocaust and cost the lives of at least 27 million Soviet citizens, the conquest and control of Ukraine played a central role. “The geopolitical-strategic and economic objective (‘We want to ride to Ostland!’) is a continuity of Wilhelmine-all-German expansionism,” wrote the historian Fritz Fischer.

Now, German imperialism is once again pursuing the goal of detaching Ukraine and other countries that once belonged to the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire from Moscow’s sphere of influence and bringing them under the control of the German-dominated European Union. And this with the full support of the Left Party.

Bartsch took part in the conference not as a critic, but as a vehement supporter. In his speech in the Bundestag following the conference, he declared:

with many colleagues at the conference. I think it is right that, after two previous conferences, this conference has taken place here in Berlin and that the Federal Government has taken responsibility.

He only criticised the German government for the fact that “a representative of BlackRock sat on the podium” at the conference in Berlin. He doubted “that a sustained reconstruction of Ukraine will be possible with people like that.” In plain language: Germany and Europe must not leave the control of Ukraine to American financial capital. Recovery was “the central challenge for Europe,” he explained. And he “believes that there is a lot ahead of us—also for our country.”

The extreme nationalism and militarism of the Left Party is not simply rooted in right-wing individuals like Bartsch, but in the character and history of the party. The Left Party has never been a left-wing or socialist organisation, but always a bourgeois party that articulates the interests of the state apparatus and the wealthy middle classes. Its predecessor organisation, the Stalinist SED/PDS, reintroduced capitalism in East Germany and thus also paved the way for the return of German militarism, which it now supports ever more aggressively.

The Left Party is therefore increasingly hated by workers and young people and—wherever it shares government at the state level—also because of its policies of social austerity, police state armament and attacks on refugees and immigrants. In the European elections at the beginning of June, it collapsed, only receiving 2.7 percent of the vote.

Workers and young people who want to fight against imperialism and war must consciously settle accounts with the Left Party and its divisive off-shoots, such as Sarah Wagenknecht’s BSW, and build the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party). It is the only force that declares war on the return of German militarism and the development of world war and arms the opposition against it with a socialist perspective.



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I was not only here yesterday for Zelensky’s speech, but also