

Germany's Left Party backs pro-war policy

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While Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President Joe Biden discussed how to further escalate the brutal wars in Ukraine and the Middle East in Berlin on Friday, the Left Party met in Halle for its federal party conference. The message from the meeting was clear: the party continues to fully support the government's pro-war policy and is preparing to directly implement it itself—if it re-enters the Bundestag.

The atmosphere at the party conference was unreal. All the explosive political developments that are keeping millions of people on tenterhooks were simply ignored. Neither the preparations for war against Iran nor the danger of nuclear war through direct attacks on Russia with NATO missiles were mentioned in the main motion or in the main speeches at the party conference. The world could have collapsed around the meeting hall and the delegates would still only have uttered hackneyed phrases about more social justice, which nobody would have bought anyway.

The reason for this evasive manoeuvre is that the Left Party supports the policies of the German government on all key issues. In the run-up to the party conference, there had been weeks of internal discussions to find wording that expressed this but sounded somewhat less martial than those of Chancellor Scholz (Social Democrat, SPD) and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Green). The main motion also states that the issue of war should not be a focus of the Bundestag (federal parliament) election campaign. At the same time, it leaves no doubt that the Left Party fully supports the war course.

Eighty-two years after the Nazi war of annihilation, German tanks are once again advancing on Russian territory and the NATO powers are openly discussing attacking Moscow with missiles. The Left Party's motion states, "The Ukrainian people are fighting for their right to national self-determination and are exercising their right to self-defence as enshrined in the UN Charter. The Left Party defends this right." Accordingly, the Left Party is not calling for an end to arms deliveries to Ukraine.

The Ukrainian population has the least interest in a

continuation of the slaughter. They are being consumed in a war that was deliberately provoked by NATO in order to subjugate Russia militarily. It is not about Ukraine's self-determination, but about subordinating the country to NATO's geostrategic interests. Germany is cooperating with openly fascist forces that see themselves in the tradition of Ukraine's Nazi collaborators in World War Two and are taking brutal action against any opposition to the war among the Ukrainian population.

There is not a word about this from the Left Party. German imperialism is not mentioned at all. A motion that at least addressed this issue was rejected outright. Instead, the party is committed to "finding credible answers to aggression and imperial endeavours by non-Western actors." Unlike at previous party conferences, the Left Party is therefore no longer calling for any significant disarmament. After the defence budget has risen by over 100 percent in the last six years alone, the Left Party's lead motion calls for a reduction in spending of just 2 percent! And only if all countries of the United Nations commit to the same step. The purely cosmetic nature of the Left Party's occasional babbling about peace could not be emphasised more clearly.

The Left Party is also fully behind the German government on the second front of the war. While Biden and Scholz discussed an open war against Iran in their Berlin talks, the Left Party's lead motion also called for tougher action against the country: "The government must make economic cooperation with the states in the region more consistently conditional on actively contributing to the peace process and refraining from or preventing escalation steps. This applies above all to Turkey, Qatar and Iran, which are among the main sponsors of Hamas."

The Left Party refuses to name the barbaric genocide in Gaza as such. The relevant wording was removed from the main motion before the party conference and replaced with the vague statement that the party welcomed the ICJ's endeavours to "prevent genocide"—as if this was not already taking place. The Palestinian uprising is denigrated as "terrorism" and, at the same time, Israel's

right to self-defence is invoked to justify the genocide. Although the Left Party calls for an end to German arms supplies to Israel, its demand for a ceasefire and the immediate release of the Israeli hostages is in line with the German government, which justifies its support for genocide with such inconsequential calls.

Furthermore, the Left Party is participating in the foul campaign to declare every opponent of the genocide an antisemite. For example, anyone who questions Israel's right to exist, i.e., who argues in favour of a common secular state with equal rights for Palestinians and Jews, is dubbed an antisemite. They could "not be an ally," according to the party conference resolution.

At the conference, the party leadership endeavoured to largely ignore the issue of war. The main motion even complains that "issues such as foreign policy were decisive in the last state elections" and that the Left Party failed to emphasise social issues instead. It now apparently wants to change this and disguise its support for a pro-war policy with a few mendacious social phrases.

In their Sunday speeches, the party leaders swaggered on about "socialism," "class politics" and "solidarity with refugees." In concrete terms, however, they only formulated a few old social democratic election promises in the main motion: "public investment," "rent caps" or "removing parts of the economy from the logic of profit." Everyone knows that such phrases are not worth the paper they are written on. In practice, as the governing party in the federal states of Berlin, Bremen and Thuringia, the Left Party has cut public services to the bone, sold off apartments to speculators and privatised former state-owned companies. Not to mention their brutal deportation policy.

The leadership elected at the conference also reflects the Left Party's moth-eaten and right-wing programme. The new chairman, Jan van Aken, has already appeared as an angry militarist in the past. Back in December 2012, together with leading government representatives, he signed the appeal "Syria: Freedom needs support," which called for an imperialist intervention in Syria. Two years later, he was even present when German weapons were delivered to Kurdish fighters in Erbil. At the so-called peace demonstration on October 3, he marched behind a Left Party banner bearing the inscription "Russia must get out of Ukraine." The second new co-chair, Ines Schwerdtner, only joined the Left Party just over a year ago. She was previously editor-in-chief of the German-language edition of the social democratic *Jacobin*

magazine, which also promotes war and capitalism.

It was also fitting for the party conference that the former national spokesperson of the Green Youth (GY), Sarah-Lee Heinrich, was invited to speak and received a standing ovation that lasted several minutes. As a leading member of the Greens, Heinrich had vehemently supported the war policy of the federal coalition government, in particular the war against Russia and the genocide in Gaza but had left the party along with the rest of the GY federal executive committee. She has now promised to remain in contact with the Left Party executive.

In his conference speech, van Aken made it clear that the Left Party would not accept any deviation from the pro-war policy under his leadership. "If you vote for me, you won't just get the nice Jan from next door, not just the dove of peace with the hoodie, you'll also get the Jan who says in no uncertain terms: that's the end of the agro. Nobody snaps into a microphone just because it's being held out to them. If you have a problem, come to Ines and me and we'll discuss it until our heads are spinning and then we'll decide and everyone will abide by that decision," threatened van Aken to thunderous applause from the delegates.

The Left Party was founded in 2007 by the old Stalinists of the successor organisation to the party of state in the former East Germany and worn-out SPD bureaucrats in order to deflect the enormous opposition to the policies of cuts and war of the SPD-Green coalition government under Gerhard Schroeder and Joschka Fischer, and thus stabilise capitalism. With the escalation of war policy and the intensification of class antagonisms, the Left Party is no longer even in a position to address the pressing issues of the day. It follows the government line in all central areas and is hated by workers and young people. A few mendacious social phrases in Halle will not change this.



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