

“Silver Locks Mission”: Germany’s Left Party stands for capitalism, social cuts and war

Johannes Stern
5 December 2024

“The message from the meeting was clear,” the WSWS wrote about the Left Party conference in Halle in October. “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 [parliament].”

This is precisely the aim of the so-called “Silver Locks Mission,” which the party grandees Gregor Gysi, Dietmar Bartsch and Bodo Ramelow officially launched at a press conference at the end of November. Their plan is to win three direct mandates in the February’s early federal elections, in order to enter the Bundestag in accordance with their second vote result, even if the Left Party again fails to clear the five percent hurdle needed to be represented.

Due to their right-wing, pro-capitalist and militarist policies, Die Linke (Left Party) is hated among workers and young people. In the last federal elections in 2021, it suffered a resounding defeat, receiving only 4.9 percent of the vote, just two million votes, or 4.3 percentage points less than four years earlier. This trend toward political obscurity continues. After a series of debacles at state level, polls show the Left Party at only 3.3 percent nationwide.

The Left Party is reacting to its own decline, the escalation of the imperialist policy of war and the growing opposition in the working class to mass layoffs and social cuts with a further turn to the right. The protagonists of the “Mission Silberlocke” (Silver Locks Mission)—Gysi, Bartsch and Ramelow—are not only among the longest-serving, but also the most right-wing Left Party politicians. What unites them is not only grey hair, but vehemently pro-capitalist and militarist views, coupled with a fear of an independent movement of the working class.

All the phrases of the “silver locks” cannot hide the fact that under their leadership, the Left Party has made possible and itself implemented the deeply anti-working-class policies of the ruling class, which are now to be taken to the extreme. It was the party’s SED/PDS (Socialist Unity Party/Party of Democratic Socialism) forerunner under the leadership of Gregor Gysi that prepared the ground for the restoration of capitalism in the Stalinist-ruled GDR (East Germany) and thus created the prerequisite for the return of German militarism and

the accompanying social counter-revolution.

Everywhere it has since governed or is governing at state level together with the Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens (the parties of massive social attacks and war), it aggressively enforces an anti-refugee and anti-working-class programme. Above all in Thuringia—where, with Bodo Ramelow, the Left Party provided its first, and, so far, only state premier between 2014 and 2024—it is notorious for high deportation rates, rampant poverty and the strengthening of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) by all the establishment parties.

At the press conference, Ramelow boasted of having played a central role in preparing the new right-wing state government in Thuringia led by his designated successor Mario Voigt (Christian Democrat, CDU). He said he was “in regular contact with Professor Voigt, also to prepare the handover with clear premises: That is, the state budget for 2025 has been handed over to parliament [and] the majority in parliament can now work with it.”

This is a brutal austerity budget that enforces the debt brake outlawing new borrowing, and provides for cuts of €1.3 billion, or about 10 percent of the total budget. In refugee policies, the state coalition of CDU, SPD and Sahra Wagenknecht’s anti-migrant BSW is adopting the demands of the AfD. Another focus is the massive beefing up of the apparatus of state surveillance and repression. Among other things, 1,800 new police officers are to be hired, and the security forces equipped with new vehicles and electric shock batons.

Ramelow left no doubt that he would work with the incoming coalition to implement this extreme right-wing programme. The twelve Left Party deputies in the state parliament would “always stand by a democratic majority,” he declared. However, “this presupposes that the coalition must talk to the Left Party about a fairness agreement so that destructive majority decisions generated by the AfD can be ruled out.”

Ramelow’s hypocritical opposition to the AfD is a sham. As the coalition agreement shows, the incoming coalition he supports is adopting the far-right party’s programme in many areas. And the Left Party and Ramelow personally have also deliberately strengthened the fascists. In 2020, Ramelow voted

to make AfD member Michael Kaufmann vice president of the Thuringia state parliament. And in the parliamentary committees of the state legislature and at municipal level, deputies from the Left Party have long been working closely with the AfD.

When Ramelow criticises the parties of the new state government, it is from the right. He said he was “very irritated” by how the BSW had “suddenly made questions related to foreign policy, arms policy and military policy the subject of state political statements.” He considered this “very problematic.” He was a supporter of the “Weimar Triangle” (a regional alliance of France, Germany, and Poland created in 1991 in the German city of Weimar) because “that is our European agenda.”

In this way, Ramelow makes it clear that he fully supports the current escalation of the war against Russia, although this is conjuring up the danger of a nuclear escalation, in which Berlin, Warsaw and France are playing a leading role. Germany and France are now openly talking about sending ground troops to Ukraine. And at the beginning of this year, Polish President Andrzej Duda called for Russia to be crushed as “the world’s largest colonial empire to date” and divided into 200 powerless ethnic microstates.

The BSW has always formulated its criticism of the war in Ukraine from the standpoint of German militarism and then largely abandoned this in the course of coalition negotiations with the CDU and SPD. But apparently, even some hollow “professions” of “peace” and “diplomacy” are unacceptable to Ramelow. In fact, he was the first leading German politician to prominently call for the deployment of German soldiers in Ukraine.

Bartsch, too, as the long-standing and, so far, last federal parliamentary leader of the Left Party, has played a key role in the return of German militarism. As early as April 2014, he was one of five Left Party members of parliament who voted in favour of sending a German frigate to the Mediterranean to destroy Syrian chemical weapons. In the 2017 federal elections, he stated in an interview with the German Armed Forces Association (DbwV) that the Left Party was a party that consistently represents the interests of soldiers.

In the last legislative period, he then dropped all pretences in line with his party. In mid-June, he took part in the so-called “Ukraine Reconstruction Conference” in Berlin, which explicitly concerned escalating the NATO war against Russia and dividing the spoils of war among the imperialist powers. Moreover, he is one of those representatives of the Left Party who loudly express their solidarity with Israel at every opportunity, a country that has been committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza for more than a year and is expanding its destructive war to the entire region.

Bartsch and the Left Party are politically responsible for the deaths of an estimated 186,000 people—the majority of whom were women and children—the near-total destruction of Gaza

and large parts of Lebanon. When a pro-Israel resolution from the SPD, Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens, and the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) was passed immediately after the start of the Israeli campaign of destruction with the votes of all (!) of the Left Party’s members of parliament, Bartsch praised the motion as a “German contribution to the fight against terror.”

Now the “silver locks” are stepping up to even overshadow these crimes and fully restore German militarism after two lost world wars and unspeakable crimes in the 20th century. In a speech in the Bundestag on the “Consequences of the American election result for Germany,” Gysi called for the fascist Trump and his America First policy to be countered by an appropriately aggressive German-European policy.

Trump would “change foreign and domestic policy” and, for example, “introduce tariffs to strengthen his own economy,” warned Gysi, and called: “And how will the EU and Germany respond? Also with tariffs on US products to help their own economy?” He feared that, as usual, they would “only beg Trump in a craven and servile manner not to make it too bad.”

He therefore hoped “to finally have a government that has the courage to represent our country as a sovereign, independent state, which, like other states, also has the right to fight passionately for its own political, economic, social and cultural interests.” He was prepared to “advise” the chancellor on this, and this “also applies to the future chancellor.”

The WSWS has described Trump’s presidency as “a violent realignment of the American political superstructure that corresponds to the real social conditions in the United States.” The same processes are at work in Germany too. The ruling class wants to use the early elections to install an extreme right-wing government that will enforce the interests of German imperialism with brute force both at home and abroad. The Left Party, as a bourgeois party that represents the interests of the capitalist state and the wealthy middle classes dependent on it, is part of this conspiracy.

Workers and young people who want to fight against militarism, social cuts, fascism and war must politically settle accounts with the Left Party and build the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party). We are standing in the elections to arm the growing opposition “with a revolutionary leadership and a socialist perspective,” as our election statement puts it. “Only if the masses independently intervene in the political process, expropriate the big banks and corporations and place them under democratic control, can war and social catastrophe be stopped.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact