

Germany's Marx 21 group backs imperialist offensive against Syria

By Johannes Stern
3 May 2018

The Marx 21 network, a pseudo-left grouping inside the Left Party with close connections to the state capitalist International Socialist Tendency (IST), has long been one of the most aggressive supporters of the imperialist offensive against Syria. After the recent attacks against Damascus, it is stepping up its campaign for a more aggressive military intervention in the country.

The article, "Syria: The Enemy of my Enemy Remains My Enemy," which featured prominently on the Marx 21 web site for several days, exemplifies the reactionary role these pseudo-left organisations play in the imperialist rape of Syria. Under the cynical cover of the struggle for "peace, freedom and respect for human rights", Marx 21 tries to portray itself as an opponent of all "warring parties". In fact, it acts as a propaganda tool for imperialism.

The entire article is directed against representatives of the Left Party, who, in the eyes of Marx 21, do not support the imperialist offensive against Syria vehemently enough. "Unfortunately," members of the Left Party had also repeatedly expressed "understanding for the government and war of the dictator Bashar al-Assad" and "indirectly defended" him, complains Marx 21 author Hans Krause. As an example, he cites claims that "reports of the 'Syrian American Medical Society' or the White Helmets about the victims of a possible Douma poison gas attack were 'hardly worth anything' because they are 'US-funded organisations'."

This argument hardly differs from the war-mongering of the bourgeois press. Despite increasing evidence showing that the White Helmets staged the Douma gas attack to provide their imperialist sponsors with a pretext for new air strikes, Marx 21 seeks to suppress any criticism of the official propaganda. Although "it is correct not to accept the poison gas attack in Duma as truth just because the American government claims it took place", it was, however, "wrong to dismiss the reports as unreliable."

The *World Socialist Web Site* has already commented in an earlier article on the cynical attempt of the Left Party to present itself as an opponent of the Syrian war. In reality, its

position largely coincides with that of the German government, whereby it insists that Berlin pursue Germany's imperialist interests more self-assuredly and independently of the United States. This is also the view of Marx 21, but it supports that wing of the ruling class which also urges taking a more aggressive course against Russia.

In line with this view, Krause doesn't fundamentally reject the recent US, French and British air strikes on Syria, but criticises them from the right. "Even the German-funded Science and Politics Foundation does not believe that NATO's missile strike in Syria has achieved anything positive," he notes at the beginning of his article. Nevertheless, "Chancellor Merkel considers them to be 'successful and appropriate'."

The entire article leaves no doubt that Marx 21 advocates regime change in Damascus brought about by the imperialist powers. It expresses particular ire towards Moscow and Damascus, even though the US and its European allies have been fighting for domination of the resource-rich and strategically important region for 15 years now.

"Neither Russia nor Syria are democratic, let alone socialist states, whatever standards are applied," Krause points out to his readers. "Both governments have falsified elections for decades, arresting and murdering oppositionists, and in Syria, long before the war." Just because Assad "does not base his rule on religion" this did not make him "a lesser evil".

Neither the actions of the Assad government nor those of the Kremlin, which defends the interests of the Russian oligarchy in Syria, can be supported by Marxists and class-conscious workers. Nevertheless, both are engaged in a predominantly defensive reaction to a war of aggression being waged by the imperialist powers contrary to international law. The imperialist powers have been intervening in Syria for the past seven years as part of their attempts to re-colonise the entire Middle East, to overthrow another pro-Russian government and act against Iran and, ultimately, Russia itself.

Marxists are not neutral in the war between imperialist

powers and oppressed countries—not because they support the governments of the latter, but in spite of these governments. The fight against the Assad regime, which represents a wing of the Syrian bourgeoisie, and the building of a democratic and equal society in Syria is the task of an independent, revolutionary movement of the working class.

By contrast, the overthrow of the Assad regime by the Western imperialist powers and their lackeys would turn the country into an imperialist protectorate and bring to power an even more reactionary regime—as the experience in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya has recently underlined. But this is exactly what Krause has in mind when he demands, “when building a new anti-war movement in Germany, it should not downplay any warmongers in this world and neither conceal nor admire murderers, either from Washington, Moscow, Damascus or another place”.

The slogan “Neither Washington nor Moscow”, which Krause resurrects here, has a long history. In the 1950s, it was used by the anti-Trotskyist “state capitalist” tendency from which Marx 21 descends to justify its orientation to imperialism. At that time, the state capitalists refused to defend China and the Soviet Union against the American invasion of Korea during the Korean War. Today, it serves to justify the installation of a pro-Western and potentially Islamist regime in Damascus.

“For a long time, left-wing organisations and parties repeatedly made the mistake of supporting the government of a state simply because it was hostile to their own government,” writes Krause. But a “left-wing foreign policy as an antithesis to pro-NATO government should not be to support another imperialist government in its struggle for commodities, markets and military staging areas”—whereby he includes not only the Kremlin, but also the Syrian government of Bashar Assad as one of the “imperialist governments”.

In his article, Krause provides the ruling class with the appropriate arguments to denounce the growing opposition to war: Those who oppose the efforts of the imperialist powers to re-colonise the entire Middle East automatically support Assad and the Putin regime.

The support of Marx 21 for German imperialism is not limited to propaganda. The pseudo-left group plays an important role in Berlin’s return to an aggressive foreign policy, and it is deeply integrated into the institutions of German imperialism. Its leading member, Christine Buchholz, has been a defence policy spokeswoman for the Left Party for nine years now; she sits on the Parliamentary Defence Committee and regularly accompanies Defence Minister Ursula von Leyen during troop visits abroad.

In this role, Marx 21 and the Left Party helped organise the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition in recent years and

have repeatedly spoken in favour of military intervention in Syria. Together with representatives of the CDU, SPD and Greens, Left Party leaders had already signed up to a statement in 2012 entitled “Syria: freedom needs assistance”, which called for “humanitarian intervention” in the country. The statement was initiated by the group Adopt a Revolution (AaR), with which Marx 21 cooperates to this day. Only in February of this year, Buchholz appeared at an AaR rally in front of the Russian Embassy in Berlin.

In Syria itself, Marx 21 works with those who openly act as ground troops for the imperialist powers. Ghayath Naisse, secretary general of the Syrian Revolutionary Left Current (SRLC), is scheduled to speak at the “Marx is a must” conference in May. The SRLC is part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which consists of Kurdish nationalist militias, parts of the Free Syrian Army, and Sunni Islamist militias, all of them operating in the region with British, French, and US troops.

At the end of the article, when Krause argues that the “solidarity” of the Left Party must “apply to all those people, groups and organisations” advocating “the survival of the people”, he means the pro-imperialist organisations and militias of the SDF. Thus, even the claim of Marx 21 to support “neither Washington, nor Moscow, nor Damascus” turns out to be a lie. His orientation to Washington is also reflected in his denunciations of the Russian and Syrian governments exclusively, and by failing to mention the massive crimes of US imperialism in Syria and the entire region.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) opposes the imperialist offensive against Syria through the building of an independent, international anti-war movement based on the working class and fighting for a socialist programme. This requires an irreconcilable political struggle against pseudo-left tendencies, such as Marx 21, which present themselves as “left-wing” or even “Marxist”, but who support the imperialist war-mongering.

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>