

Germany: Green Party leaders campaign for the armed forces

By Johannes Stern
18 June 2019

In spring 1999, as part of the governing coalition with the Social Democrats, the Green Party under Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer organized the first Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) combat mission since the end of the Second World War, in Yugoslavia. Twenty years later, the former pacifists are celebrating their turn towards war and now openly present themselves as the leading party of German militarism.

In a guest contribution, “Why Green foreign policy needs the Bundeswehr”, which appeared last Thursday in the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, former Green Party leader Cem Özdemir and acting defence spokesman for the Greens Tobias Lindner described “the decision to support this NATO deployment of the red-green federal government” as “one of the biggest trials for our party.”

They add in the next sentence, “the bottom line, however, is it has solidified us as a party of peace, because today, we say clearly: The use of the military is needed as the last resort, so that Germany and Europe can live up to their humanitarian responsibility.”

The Greens’ propaganda recalls the “Newspeak” in George Orwell’s novel *1984*. It turns reality on its head. Those waging war are from a “party of peace,” and the deployment of the military is considered a “humanitarian” act. Of course, the reality is completely different. NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia was a war of aggression contrary to international law, which brought death and suffering to the civilian population. And all the subsequent foreign missions of the Bundeswehr in Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East have pursued imperialist interests.

Özdemir and Lindner leave no doubt that the Greens will continue to support German war policy in the future, sacrificing the lives of their own soldiers.

“When we, as members of the Bundestag [federal parliament], send the parliamentary army on foreign missions, we intervene in the life plans of the soldiers, sending someone’s mother, father or friend off to a distant place. Above all, we put their life on the line,” their commentary reads. “This responsibility is one of the hardest we have as members of parliament. No matter how we regard individual missions: The more than 260,000 people serving in the Bundeswehr deserve parliament’s support.”

In order to enforce the interests of German imperialism worldwide, Özdemir and Lindner are demanding a massive military rearmament and the establishment of a European army. The Bundeswehr should be made “fit for the future” and equipped so that it can “live up to its responsibilities”. This would require “the harmonization of existing capabilities and planning of the EU partner states, with the long-term goal of [creating] a European army. That does not have to be in contradiction to NATO.”

Obviously, the leaders of the Greens can hardly wait to integrate themselves into the military machinery and put into action the German-European war policy. On the same day that their article appeared in the FAZ, Özdemir and Lindner presented themselves on their respective social media profiles in Bundeswehr fatigues. Özdemir wrote on his Instagram account: “A Green at the Bundeswehr—does that go together? I think so.” For him and Lindner, it was part of “spending a week in the daily life of the troops and to exchange views intensively with the soldiers.”

The military week in which the Green Party politicians took part was a so-called “InfoDVag,” an official event providing information about the armed forces.

The Army web site makes clear what these events are

about. They serve “to attract leading figures from civilian society as well as those in political office as multipliers for supporting the security and defence policy tasks and objectives of the Bundeswehr and their reorientation.” As part of the event, all participate “with all the rights but also duties in a military service.”

In addition to members of the Bundestag and state parliaments, a DVag event could also include “high-ranking civilian executives from business, the public sector and science, representatives of employers’, workers’ and trade associations as well as trade unions and non-governmental organizations”. Likewise, “high-ranking civil servants, ... judges, public prosecutors and selected representatives from the fields of education, research and the media.”

In other words, the political elites from politics, business, science, and the state and trade union apparatus not only act as direct lobbyists of the military but can receive weapons training themselves.

A German Army report about the DVag in Munster states, “Get out of the office and the Bundestag, into the army.” And that is meant quite literally. Pictures show the Green parliamentarians and other participants of the training week standing at attention, taking a solemn oath as they are inducted “into the community of soldiers and troops” and driving “the main Leopard battle tank” and “armoured Puma and Marder troop carriers” through the tank training area in Munster.

Further elements of the programme, in addition to “high-quality lectures, getting to know and train in vehicles, weapons and equipment, the basics of shooting, shooting with hand weapons, living in the field, overcoming obstacles and an orientation exercise”, included a religious “field service” and “visit to the German tank museum.”

The fact that at least two leading representatives of the Greens enthusiastically participated in this militaristic activity leaves only one conclusion: after 20 years of war policy, the Greens party colour exactly matches that of the olive-green camouflage of the military.

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