

Germany: Left Party supports Libya conference and possible military deployment

By Johannes Stern
24 January 2020

“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,” Lenin wrote in his classic *Imperialism*, which analysed the driving forces of the First World War. The “enormous dimensions of finance capital concentrated in a few hands” over all sectors of society and the “increasingly intense struggle” between the imperialist powers’ “division of the world and domination over other countries” had led “the propertied classes to go over entirely to the side of imperialism.”

This assessment sums up the reaction of the Left Party to the so-called Libya Conference that took place in Berlin last Sunday. Although the conference was a meeting of imperialist brigands who discussed the military occupation of the resource-rich country and the redivision of the entire continent under the guise of peace, it was acclaimed by the Left Party in the loftiest tones. Nor does the Left Party leadership rule out a possible deployment of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), which would plunge the country, riven by war since the NATO bombing in 2011, even further into the abyss.

While the conference was still in full swing on Sunday, Dietmar Bartsch, leader of the Left Party in the Bundestag, signalled his support for a possible German military deployment on broadcaster ARD’s television programme *Report from Berlin*.

The presenter remarked that monitoring the cease-fire negotiated by the German government meant “in case of doubt, German soldiers as well,” and asked, “Are you going along with this?” Bartsch replied, “Well, this is the seventh step. First, it must be ensured that no more weapons are exported to this region. That would already be an essential step.” Without them, “both parties could not wage war at all, not even knives are produced in their regions.”

Bartsch repeatedly made it clear that in the end, the Left

Party also advocates military means for stabilizing and controlling the country. “If a constitutional order in Libya could really be achieved, perhaps even elections, then it would be a step where a legitimate government could ask the UN for a mandate,” he said. He was only against it, because Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) or Green Party leader Robert Habeck immediately shout for German troops, “even though they haven’t been asked yet.” At the moment, “this question is not posed”, he said, but “rather the steps that are necessary. And then one can also talk about military monitoring.”

The leading foreign policy makers of the Left Party expressed similar views. Stefan Liebich, foreign policy spokesman of the Bundestag faction, declared his support for a “humanitarian” military operation to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. “If it were possible to negotiate a sustainable peace solution for Libya under the umbrella of the UN, the five permanent members of the Security Council should also be prepared to guarantee this with blue helmets, provided Libya so desires,” he said.

Sevim Da?delen, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and deputy leader of the Left Party in the Bundestag, hailed the German government’s advances on Libya on Sunday evening on the “Anne Will” talk show. In the presence of the Social Democratic Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, she said, “I criticise the federal government where it is to be criticised. But one thing must of course be said: something can only fail if you have done something ... The alternative is not to do anything, and the German government has not done that here. So, we have to say that it was the right thing to do.” It was “already a success” that “so many were there” at the Libya conference.

When Da?delen criticizes the government, she does this from the right. One “flaw,” for example, was that Berlin did not cooperate closely enough with General Khalifa

Haftar, the leader of the militarily dominant party in the Libyan civil war. “In international politics, we cannot choose who is there,” she said, “we have to accept the realities. Haftar is a reality, he is a player, he controls 70 to 80 percent of Libya. So, if you say you’re not negotiating with him, you must ask, ‘Who are you negotiating with?’”

Her conclusion: Germany must ultimately act even more aggressively in order to assert its imperialist goals against the other powers in Libya. “Another flaw” was that in Berlin, “no agreement was reached” to disarm “the foreign troops and militias, such as these Islamist terrorist gangs of Erdoğan.” One must now “exert political pressure on all the countries involved in the Libyan war.” The German government should “set a good example” and, for instance, “stop arms exports to all those involved in the Libyan war.”

Da?delen preferred not to openly argue in favour of a military mission, but to justify the German-European intervention in the name of “reconstruction.”

“Anyone who now cries out for new military operations is violating the spirit of this Berlin Declaration,” she said. Europe should get involved in “reconstruction” and not in “a new military operation.” She “found it remarkable that thinking is only in military categories.”

Of course, Da?delen knows very well that the “spirit of the Berlin Declaration” she invokes also means military control and exploitation of a country rich in raw materials, from the point of view of German imperialism.

“France, Italy and Russia are in it because they have very strong economic interests,” she said. “It is, of course, oil and gas. Libya has the largest oil reserves on the African continent and is in fourth place for gas. Not only France’s Total and Italy’s Eni are at war there, but also Germany’s BASF subsidiary Wintershall Dea has a great interest in oil production. Of course, it’s also about a proxy war for the oil companies.”

It comes as no surprise that the Left Party, after the Greens, is now also prepared to paint brutal, neo-colonial interventions “in the brightest colours” (Lenin) and support them in every possible way. Ever since its predecessor, the Stalinist party of state SED/PDS, reintroduced capitalism in East Germany 30 years ago, it has been a bourgeois party through and through, representing not the interests of workers, but wealthy upper-middle class layers and the capitalist state.

Against the background of growing class struggles and fierce conflicts between the great powers over the division of the world, the Left Party has been acting more

and more openly as the party of German imperialism in recent years.

For example, Liebich was involved in the drafting of the white paper “New Power—New Responsibility,” which was published in autumn 2013 and laid the foundation for Germany’s return to an aggressive foreign and great power policy.

In the subsequent implementation of this policy in the Middle East, the Left Party was fully on board. Even before the official start of the German war effort in Syria in December 2015, it supported the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition and came to prominence with calls such as “Syria: Freedom needs assistance” or “Save Kobane!” for a more aggressive German intervention.

In April 2014, several members of the Left Party in the Bundestag—including Bartsch and Liebich—voted in favour of sending a German frigate to the Mediterranean. Now they are ready to support a massive military intervention in Libya, which would only be the prelude to recolonization of the entire continent.

Workers and young people who want to fight against war and imperialism must learn the political lessons of this. The Left Party stands on the other side of the barricades also on the war question.

As in the times of Lenin and the 1917 October Revolution, which brought an end to the First World War, there is only one way to stop the development of war today: the building of an international anti-war movement, which is based on the growing global struggles of the working class, is directed against capitalism and advocates a socialist programme. What is necessary is the building of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the International Committee of the Fourth International as a new revolutionary mass party of the international working class.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>