

IMI-Analyse 2002/051en / in: iacenter.org, New York

"We still don't believe you"

A short evaluation of the new German discussion about the coming war against Iraq and proposals for positions of the peace movement

Below is an English translation of a text by an influential German antimilitarist analyzing the role of the planned Iraq war in the German national election (vote Sept. 22) and the new position taken by the current ruling coalition of the Social Democratic Party/Greens, known as the red-green government. The writer, Tobias Pflueger, faced trial following the NATO war on Yugoslavia for informing German troops that it was their constitutional right to refuse duty in that war, that indeed, they were violating the law by participating in the war.

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13.08.02

by Tobias Pflüger

1. The new standpoint of the red-green (SPD-Green) federal government is hardly credible

Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer have spoken out clearly in the last few days against a new war on Iraq. This is a new standpoint. Because of the earlier history (early pledge of support for war in March 2002) and the results of red-green pro-war policies Schröder and Fischer's "anti-war course" has little credibility. In the following text we will analyze what would be necessary to make the federal government's refusal to participate in a war against Iraq more credible.

In our opinion, the peace, anti-war and anti-globalization movement [in Germany] should adopt these positions in the current debate about stopping a war against Iraq.

2. The German pledge of support for war and how the federal government can distance itself from it

We know, that already in March 2002 Gerhard Schröder gave an informal pledge of support to the U.S. government for

German participation in a war against Iraq. The conditions he made at that time were: first, the war should take place over the national election in Germany and second, the attack must take place under the aegis of a United Nations mandate. This information was made public in the meantime by Karl Lamers of the Christian Democratic Union (Reuters, Aug. 6, 2002).

One of the most important questions of the hour is whether or not this war pledge still is valid today.

What is necessary is a public declaration by the federal government that the pledge regarding the U.S. government for support or participation in a war against Iraq no longer holds or that the earlier pledge has been taken back by the German federal government or is no longer binding.

In order to do this the federal government must declare to the U.S. government that the federal government will not support the war against Iraq in the following areas: no financial support, no allocation of German Bundeswehr [Armed Forces] troops for the planned war, no support of troops, no allocation of the military infrastructure in Ger-

many (that includes not only the German but also the U.S. bases like Spangdahlem, Ramstein, Frankfurt Airport among others), and a German veto inside NATO against the support of a war on Iraq.

3. Bundeswehr soldiers in Kuwait - only an immediate withdrawal makes an anti-war position credible

At the current time in the wake of the Enduring Freedom program there are still 52 ABC-Abwehrkräfte (that are Defensiv-Forces against nuclear (atomic), biological and chemical weapons) of the Bundeswehr with six Fox Tanks stationed in Kuwait. The equipment was left behind following a military exercise in Kuwait in which 250 Bundeswehr soldiers took part.

The ABC-Defenders soldiers, who participated in an exercise in March now again are to take part in further maneuvers. The exact "assigned tasks" are still open.

Stepped up maneuvers in Kuwait are-and on this all military experts are united-an important sign pointing to a subsequent attack against Iraq. According to the first war plans against Iraq in December 2001, which were then postponed because of the refusal of the West-oriented Arab governments to back Vice President Dick Cheney's requests (The background was the brutal conduct of the Israeli military in the Palestinian areas), there was an even stronger military exercise (Desert Spring) in Kuwait.

The new "Defense Minister" Dr. Peter Struck decided that at the request of the U.S. government the ABC-Defenders will stay in Kuwait, among other things to protect U.S. soldiers.

Struck's explanation that the ABC-Protection Forces would have other tasks besides taking part in a war against Iraq is fully unbelievable. It was planned that ABC-Defenders would be stationed in Kuwait in order to come to the aid of the attacking troops should there be an invasion of Iraq. Friedrich Merz (CDU) sees that clearer: "All ABC-Protection Materiel has remained in Kuwait, and if in the region there it should come to a conflict, Germany

will naturally take part" (Financial Times May 24, 2002).

Our demand is thus clear: Immediate withdrawal of all Bundeswehr soldiers from Kuwait!

4. The population is against the war against Iraq-domestic political debate

The parties' discussion about the Iraq war shows much calculation about the electoral struggle. All in all the debate among the parties helps little: CDU-leader Schäuble and SPD-Klose for the war, CDU-Lamers, Schröder und Fischer publicly against it. CDU-Pflüger wishes for a mandate from the United Nations, but doesn't consider it absolutely necessary. Die FDP criticizes the attempt to "bring foreign policy into the electoral struggle" (sic!) and former Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher wants a Bundestag (Parliament) declaration on the planned war on Iraq. The candidate for Chancellor from the CDU/CSU apparently does not want to express himself on the subject. According to the French Press Agency (AFP), he is playing "hide-and-seek." Stoiber knows that a pro-war position is unpopular.

What is decisive, the population of Germany according to polls is between 73 percent (n-tv/Emnid) and 91 percent (Spiegel magazine) against a war against Iraq. These numbers were all-in-all about the same before the superficial turn in the red-green federal government regarding the Iraq question.

A superficial distancing from the war will hardly win votes for the SPD and the Greens. Schröder and Fischer's new "anti-war course" is hardly credible. The red-green government has up to this point twice taken part in aggressive wars (the NATO war attacking Yugoslavia, the so-called "Kosovo" war-and the war against Afghanistan). Besides the red-green group through the change in structure of the Bundeswehr-called a "reform"-has made it despite all its inadequacies decisively more capable of carrying out a war.

5. The establishment of a government based on its opposition to war is highly problematical - against the "German way"

The SPD wants to bring foreign policy into the electoral struggle. So far so good. But the stated reasons for this decision makes one shudder. To quote Gerhard Schröder: "We have started on our path, on our German path. But we have not accomplished everything. For that reason we need a mandate to follow this path to the end." And: "I think that we have proven after September 11 of last year, that we have behaved prudently and in the interest of security of our people, with regard to the community of nations and friends in the United States, but that we are not prepared to take part in adventures and it will stay that way."

Regarding the war in Afghanistan there is no way one can speak of prudence (Keyword: Special Commando Unit, among others). The most interesting point however is the formulation "German path," that the SPD-campaigner dreamed up.

The talks by Gerhard Schröder and Franz Müntefering at the campaign meeting in Hannover are sprinkled with such formulations about German paths.

The peace movement's opposition to war has nothing in common with this position, which borrows from a nationalistic body of thought.

6. Not only against German participation in the war, but against the war itself

The peace movement's goal must naturally not only be to prevent German participation in the war, but also to make the war itself impossible. The military infrastructure of Germany is of vital importance to the ability of U.S. troops to carry out the war.

Working together with peace, anti-war and anti-globalization movements around the entire globe is very important. We must struggle side-by-side with the opponents of war in the USA and in the other Euro-

pean countries against the drive to war by the current governments.

7. The situation in Iraq itself - the embargo must be lifted

The recently resigned CDU foreign policy expert Karl Lamers focused on a further decisive point: "No one has a concept of what will happen following a possible removal of Saddam Hussein from power and how the country [Iraq] will be able to be held together." (AFP, Aug. 4, 2002) Already after the second Gulf war (1991) the war coalition at that time allowed the Kurdish and Shiite populations run horribly into a knife, while Saddam Hussein stayed in power.

The population of Iraq, not the highly criticized Saddam Hussein regime, suffers heavily under the embargo hanging over the country. The embargo is a war against the Iraqi civilian population. An anti-war position is thus only credible if it also concerns the well-being of the Iraqi population. Thus the goal must clearly be the lifting of the embargo against Iraq. The federal government, if it is really against a war, must also set to to fight for a lifting of the embargo. It should no longer apply the embargo itself and must organize assistance for the suffering Iraqi population.

8. UN-Iraq negotiations

If the German government refuses to make war against Iraq, it should dedicate itself inside the UN to a goal-oriented negotiation with the Iraqi government. The goal could be to have the UN negotiate earnestly based on the newly expressed invitation of the Iraqi government.

The current negotiations of the UN representative in reality gives the impression that - with a cautious glance at the U.S. government-Iraq will be given no real chance to fulfill the conditions for acceptance of UN inspectors.

It is now officially acknowledged - through the then leader of the UNSCOM-Mission Rolf Ekéus (1991 to 1997) - that U.S. spies were present among the UNSCOM inspectors and that UNSCOM was used to

carry out spying tasks. The goal was to be the installation of listening devices. Under a clear misuse of the UN mandate the agents looked into such devices and posts of the Iraqi secret service and army. After Ekéus' replacement by the Australian Richard Butler there took place to his knowledge a series of "doubtful inspections." Ekeus explained further that also other members of the UN Security Council exercised pressure in the direction of provocative UNSCOM demands on Iraq, in order to create a pretext for taking military steps against the Saddam Hussein government.

For the Iraqis then to distrust the U.S. inspectors is thoroughly justified.

9. NATO-meeting directly after the vote - war scenarios

On September 24-25 the so-called informal meeting of the defense ministers of NATO will take place in Warsaw, Poland. It can be assumed that the individual NATO countries will have to declare there how they will take part in a war against Iraq.

If the federal government is really against an Iraq war, it must declare today that Peter Struck will let it be known in Warsaw that neither German troops nor infrastructure will be made available for a war against Iraq.

The probability of a war would decrease greatly if the European NATO countries would consistently, resolutely and determinedly speak out against an invasion of Iraq. In the International Herald Tribune (IHT) on July 25 it was written for example that the European NATO countries could prevent completely a war against Iraq or at least postpone it for months, as the U.S. government is so dependent on the military infrastructure located in Europe.

Besides this the [German] federal government must also exert pressure that the various concrete plans for war that are laid before George W. Bush be made public. The commander of the U.S. troops stationed in the Gulf region, General Tommy Franks, laid a new invasion plan against

Iraq before George W. Bush. In this war scenario there was included an invasion of Iraq with 50,000 to 80,000 soldiers, supported by massive air power. Another war plan speaks of about 250,000 soldiers, for carrying out the invasion of Iraq. In another plan they have begun to talk about a commando action.

In the war itself one can assume that massive units of high-tech weapons, such as guided missiles, Cruise missiles and so-called precision bombs ("collateral damage" included).

10. Interfering with the ability of the military to wage war

In order to be able to stop wars, it is necessary to dismantle the armies' ability to wage war. To this end there is the concept of "qualitative disarmament," which means, first to dismantle the military units with which wars can be waged. In Germany these units are the intervention forces of the Bundeswehr. As long as the units capable of waging war are available, empirical experience has shown they will be sent into action.

These Bundeswehr intervention forces, earlier called crisis-reaction forces, must be dissolved!

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