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Ukraine solidarity

Anti-militarism that forgets those under attack is no anti-militarism at all

- Features -

A poster for an international discussion. The top part has a blue and red background with the text 'SOLIDARITÄT MIT DEM UKRAINISCHEN WIDERSTAND' and 'RESISTANCE AGAINST ARMAMENT'. Below this, it says 'International discussion ahead of the party conference of Die Linke' and provides details: 'June, 19-21 Uhr', 'Wednesday, 17 June, 7-9 pm via Zoom'. It lists speakers: Olya Lushchynko, Mikael Herdt, Catherine Samary, Thomas Weyls, Sacha Ismail, and David Kozda. Logos for 'emanzipation', 'UKRAINIAN LEFT INITIATIVE', and 'NPA' are at the bottom.

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Manifesto for Signatories

Against the arms race as a profit-making machine. Against turning a blind eye to Russian imperialism. For a left-wing peace policy that integrates self-defense and social control. No weapons for profit, but weapons for those under attack. Peace means an end to aggression

Sign this manifesto if you want this voice to be heard at the Die Linke convention.

Ahead of the Potsdam Party Convention of Die Linke (June 19–21, 2026), leftists in solidarity with Ukraine are using this manifesto to take a stand on Motion G.26 “We Won’t Pay for Your Wars!”. Comrades, elected officials, and political organizations that support this position can sign on.

Launch phase: Initial signatures from several state associations have been received. Public names will follow after verification.

[Sign on now.](#)

Privacy principle: The list remains internal during the launch phase. Only those who expressly consent will be named publicly.

I. What This Is About

A left-wing peace policy that forgets those under attack is no peace policy. [Motion G.26 “We Won’t Pay for Your Wars!”](#) has precisely this problem. Thus, a motion is before the federal party convention that aims to sharpen the party’s peace policy line in the name of rearmament, social cuts, and new wars.

Anyone reading it solely in the context of the German budget debate might easily mistake it for a consistent anti-militarist response. It opposes billion-euro programs for the military and armaments, Rheinmetall profits, and the normalization of war readiness, while advocating for conversion, school strikes, and counseling on conscientious objection.

We share this social diagnosis: Anyone who allocates more than 108 billion euros to defense spending in 2026 alone while simultaneously freezing the standard social welfare rate at 563 euros is waging class warfare from above. If Rheinmetall’s stock price has increased sixteenfold since 2022, that is not a market anomaly—it is a political decision. A left-wing party must fight against social cuts, arms profits, and the militarization of everyday life. But it must also honestly acknowledge that Germany has co-financed Putin’s aggressive power for years through cheap energy imports—even after the 2014 annexation of Crimea, even while Russian dissidents were being imprisoned.

But Motion G.26 does not speak in a vacuum. It comes after more than four years of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and in the midst of a programmatic debate in which the party must decide whether it will continue to

treat Eastern European security needs as a footnote. This is precisely where the problem lies: The motion addresses rearmament, profits, and war readiness, but it renders the attacked Ukraine and the threatened societies in Eastern Europe invisible and reduces Russian imperialism to a side issue. Attacked societies are not pawns to be moved between power blocs, but political subjects with their own history, their own social struggles, and their own right to self-determination.

That is why we are writing not from an academic distance, but as Eastern European leftists. We know what Putin's "peace" means—and that is precisely why we do not want it. Motion G.26 draws three false conclusions from correct observations: a false history, a false symmetry, a false answer. This text is directed against that.

II. False History — The 1914 Trap

Motion G.26 invokes the SPD's war credits of 1914. The SPD's approval of the war credits was a political capitulation to nationalism and a truce among enemies—because it supported an imperialist aggression between imperialist powers. No one was liberated. Everyone was sacrificed.

But 2022 is not 1914. The reference to the war credits only works if military support today means the same thing as it did then: approval of the war waged by one's own imperialist state. That is precisely not the case here. One side is defending itself. The other has attacked. Ukraine is not the German Empire. It is the republic under attack. The attack was an imperial decision against Ukraine's self-determination.

Those who blur this distinction are not repeating the anti-war reflex of the Bolsheviks in 1914. They are repeating the mistake of those Moscow-loyal leftists who dismissed the Hungarian uprising in 1956 as "counterrevolutionary," the Prague Spring in 1968 as "misguided," and Georgia in 2008 as "provocative." Each time, Moscow stood there with its tanks. Each time, a segment of the Western left showed sympathy. This is not our tradition.

Marx and Engels supported the Polish uprisings against the Tsarist Empire—not out of national romanticism, but because they understood the oppression of entire peoples as a shackle on democratic and socialist liberation. The International Brigades went to Spain in 1936—not "against both warring parties," but against Franco. In Rojava, too, leftists have understood that self-defense against reactionary violence cannot be replaced by appeals. Anti-fascism is concrete. It chooses a side and accepts the risks that come with it. That is the tradition we are continuing.

III. False Symmetry — The Perpetrator Systematically Concealed

This distorted history also creates a false symmetry that runs throughout the entire text. The motion mentions Israel and the U.S. when it seeks to name aggressors. It does not mention what Russia has done. Not a word about Bucha, not a word about Mariupol, not a word about the Ukrainian children deported to Russia. Omission is also a stance. Anyone who does not call this war by its name has already half-accepted it.

Yet the motion speaks of "working people in Ukraine as well as in Russia"—as if both had the same choice. They did not. One side was invaded. The other side carried out the invasion. Symmetry between the aggressor and the attacked is not pacifism. It is complicity with the stronger party.

That is precisely why we must distinguish between the Russian state and the people who refuse to participate in this war. Solidarity with Russian deserters and conscientious objectors is not a substitute for or a counterweight to solidarity with Ukraine, but rather its antimilitarist corollary. A supposed “solidarity with Russia” that treats imprisoned Russian anti-war activists merely as a mirror image of Ukrainian suffering renders both invisible: state repression in Russia and the reality of everyday life in Ukraine under attack by bombs.

This weakness is not new to the party. In Crimea in 2014, in Syria, during the full-scale invasion in 2022, and in Gaza, Die Linke was too often too divided, too late, or too preoccupied with itself. This problem is also openly acknowledged in the current programmatic debate. But an admission that repeats the same gap in the next peace policy motion does not end the mistake. It only makes it more visible. And this gap specifically affects the Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, and Central European leftists in this party, whose political experience with the Kremlin predates the German debate about it.

IV. The Wrong Answer — No Weapons for Profit, but Weapons for the Attacked

This false symmetry gives rise to the wrong political answer. Yes, military spending is used to justify cuts to social services. Yes, Rheinmetall and other corporations turn war into a business model. Yes, the Left must not legitimize this profit machine. But it does not follow that military support for Ukraine is wrong. It follows that this support must not be left to the profit logic of the arms corporations.

The crucial distinction does not lie between “weapons” and “no weapons.” It lies between two ways of organizing security: as a private profit-making venture or as a democratically controlled public responsibility. Those who say, “No weapons, because Rheinmetall profits,” are leaving Ukraine to Russian imperialism and the security issue to the right-wing, the military, and corporations. Those who say, “More weapons, no matter the conditions,” turn every crisis into a free pass for extra profits, lack of transparency, and political blackmail. A left-wing response must reject both.

The question, then, is not whether societies under attack have the right to self-defense. They do. Anyone who takes the UN Charter seriously cannot pit its prohibition on the use of force against the right to self-defense of those under attack. The Erfurt Program places international law and the United Nations at the center of left-wing peace policy; this commitment must also apply to Article 51. The question is under what social conditions this self-defense is supported. Public funds must mean public conditions: open cost control, limits on windfall profits, parliamentary oversight, and public transparency regarding procurement and exports; cooling-off periods to prevent the revolving door between ministries and corporations; and rights to publicly funded technology. No blank check for Rheinmetall. No procurement policy that serves as a corporate subsidy program. Where the market fails—in ammunition, drone defense, spare parts, air defense components, and protective equipment—public forms of production and European procurement under democratic control are needed.

This also applies to conversion. Anyone who today merely says “conversion,” as if we were still living in the disarmament debates of the 1990s, is missing the point. In reality, we are also experiencing reverse conversion: civilian industrial capacities are being opened up for arms production. That is why any publicly funded expansion of military production requires worker participation, collective bargaining agreements, training, and a civilian transition plan. In this way, support for Ukraine does not become a contradiction to left-wing anti-militarist policy, but rather its litmus test: not fewer weapons for Ukraine, but less private leverage over weapons production. No weapons for profit. But weapons for those under attack.

V. What We Demand

What we expect from the motion is not less antimilitarism, but consistent antimilitarism. This critique does not lead to abstract declarations, but to concrete changes to the motion and the party's programmatic line:

1. Clear recognition of Ukraine's right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. International law is indivisible—the UN Charter applies without double standards, against any aggressor. This entails political solidarity with societies under attack that are defending themselves against reactionary and imperialist violence, from Ukraine to Rojava.
2. Continuation of defensive arms deliveries to Ukraine—from democratically controlled production, with priority given to air defense and protective equipment, free from the private blackmailing power of arms corporations, and with a perspective for conversion for the post-war era. No weapons for profit. But weapons for those under attack.
3. Democratically coordinated arms production instead of a profit-driven sector—public conditionality, open cost control, public transparency, targeted public forms of production, and democratic firewalls against the lobbying power of arms corporations.
4. Binding co-determination on conversion in both directions—conversion councils with workers, unions, and local governments, collective bargaining agreements, training, and prospects for a return to civilian life for every publicly funded expansion of military production.
5. Protection and reception of Russian deserters and conscientious objectors — because the concrete antimilitarist consequence is not symmetry between states, but support for those who evade the army of aggression.
6. Antifascist security policy as the party's programmatic line — neither subject to NATO logic nor to arms corporations, but also not pacifism of self-surrender. Rather, a Left that conceives of security from below: for tenants, for refugees, for societies under attack and threat.

VI. Who is speaking here

This manifesto is an intervention by the Network for Just Peace (NGF). Within the NGF, leftists in solidarity with Ukraine—with or without personal ties to Ukraine, Russia, and Eastern Europe—work together. We are united not by origin, but by a political stance. The Ukrainian Left Initiative (ULI) and the BAG Russian-Speaking Left (RL) have contributed this text through the NGF. It deliberately focuses on Ukrainian, Russian-speaking, and Eastern European experiences, because it is precisely these perspectives that are missing from Motion G.26.

The Ukrainian Left Initiative (ULI) brings to the NGF the perspective of leftists in Germany who are Ukrainian or in solidarity with Ukraine. Many of us know about Russia's war of aggression not from television images, but from family histories, flight, political work, and contacts with trade unions, left-wing organizations, and social movements in Ukraine. We are fighting for solidarity with Ukraine that goes beyond the state: for military support for self-defense, for social and trade union reconstruction, for the rights of refugees, and against any right-wing co-optation of the Ukrainian issue.

The BAG Russian-Speaking Left (RL) brings to the NGF the perspective of Russian-speaking leftists who oppose Putin's war, nationalism, and repression—in Russia, in exile, and among migrants in Germany. For us, being Russian-speaking is neither a political camp nor an excuse for imperialist nostalgia. Many of us are witnessing how Putin's war is also dividing migrant communities here: those who oppose it are treated as traitors by the right and as disruptive elements by parts of the German left. We insist: solidarity with Russian deserters, conscientious objectors, and dissidents is part of solidarity with Ukraine, not against it.

We are not Atlanticists. We are not Putin apologists. This manifesto gives voice to what the German left has lacked

for decades: an Eastern European voice from the left, supported by a network of solidarity. Precisely for this reason, we address all those who want a left-wing peace policy that sees those under attack. To ignore this voice—as Motion G.26 does—is not internationalist. It is ignorance with a leftist tinge.

VII. Conclusion

We will not pay for Rheinmetall's profits. We will not pay for Merz's rearmament fantasies. We will not pay for a policy that pits the welfare state against security.

But we will not let Ukraine pay either—with its cities, its children, its right to self-determination—so that a German Left Party consensus can maintain its simplistic slogan.

Solidarity is not symmetrical.

Anti-militarism is not looking the other way.

Peace is not the silence of the attacked.

Peace is the end of aggression.

Peace through self-determination—not peace through submission.

This is what we are fighting for at the federal party convention.

Anyone who shares this position—as a comrade, an initiative, a grassroots organization, or an elected official—is invited to co-sign this text, join the discussion, and fight alongside us at the Federal Party Convention.

Source: [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#)

PS:

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