

PUBLIC DENUNCIATION OF THE PEACE ISSUE - ON THE SOCIAL TREATMENT OF APPEALS FOR PEACE ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Irrespective of the question of whether the Russian Federation bears sole responsibility for the military escalation in Ukraine or whether NATO or influential NATO states, such as the United States or Great Britain, are also partly to blame for the outbreak of war, various peace initiatives attempted to find support in the peace movement and in broader circles of the population with the help of appeals and calls. The means to this end were, in particular, lists of signatories on Internet platforms or websites, sometimes combined with calls for rallies and conferences.

Particularly worthy of mention are Alice Schwarzer's open letter to Chancellor Olaf Scholz, with over 500,000 signatures, and the 'Manifesto for Peace' initiated jointly by Alice Schwarzer and Sahra Wagenknecht, with almost 800,000 signatures on the Change.org Internet platform (as of April 2023).

The public reception of this peace action, which reached broader sections of the population, especially by representatives of government policy, political scientists and the media, will be written about in more detail below.

In addition, there was an international appeal by the International Peace Bureau (IPB) at Christmas 2022/23, which was signed by only a few thousand international peace activists. Also a Peace Appeal with first signatories from 10 countries on the internet platform 'Action Network' found so far only a little over 3000 international signatories (as of April 2023).

APPEAL FOR PEACE

A German-Austrian appeal, the 'Appell für den Frieden' (Appeal for Peace), found a little more signatures in the international context with over 7000 signatures so far. It features a peace ecology approach and contains three demands:

National governments and transnational institutions should advocate for three peace-political and -ecological measures in particular:

1) diplomatic initiatives would have to take priority in the war in Ukraine, at the latest from now on. To this end, it is demanded that an international high-ranking and highly legitimized negotiating commission headed by the UN Secretary General would have to clear the way for ceasefire negotiations in Ukraine as a prerequisite for peace negotiations. The German and Austrian governments should strongly advocate such a peace initiative to the UN Secretary General.

2) In future climate protection negotiations, rules and guidelines should be drawn up for more binding consideration of military-related CO2 emissions, obliging individual states to be more transparent. This should include effective controls and strict sanctions for failure to take into account military-related CO2 emissions at home and abroad in national CO2 balances.

3) The war in Ukraine is currently being instrumentalized for the international arms build-up spiral. In addition, almost all major arms control and disarmament treaties have been terminated or suspended by the USA and the Russian Federation. In contrast, controlled and coordinated disarmament negotiations should be called for

through the UN. In particular, the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, successfully introduced by ICAN to the UN, should be signed, ratified and implemented by the states to be addressed in a mutually coordinated and monitored process. (Austria has already ratified the treaty).

Common to all these different peace appeals is that such peace policy initiatives have been subjected to extreme 'shitstorms' in social media, in addition to endorsements. The authors also had to listen to or read abusive criticism and personal insults as well as threats. Here we can see a brutalization of the public debate now also around peace policy content via social media, such as Facebook or Twitter.

BUILD PEACE!

One also has the impression that organized forces are using the protection of anonymity and their aliases to discredit people advocating ceasefires and peace negotiations as Putin's servants, traitors to the Ukrainian people, paid by Putin and the like.

The latest peace initiative was penned by SPD politicians, including the eldest son of Willy and Ruth Brandt, Peter Brandt (historian and retired professor), Reiner Braun (International Peace Office), Reiner Hoffmann (former chairman of the DGB) and Michael Müller (federal chairman of the Naturefriends). This appeal was published in two German newspapers under the title "Build Peace! Ceasefire and Common Security Now!" with 200 signatories, among them the former Bundestag president Thierse, the ex-minister of justice Prof. Dr. Herta Däubler-Gmelin, Dr. Margot Käßmann, theologian and former chairman of the council of the EKD, and EX-EU-Commissar Verheugen as well as several political scientists. In this appeal, Chancellor Olaf Scholz is asked to form a negotiating commission together with France and in particular the states together with France in particular Brazil, China, India and Indonesia, which should bring about a ceasefire and peace negotiations in Ukraine. The text states " (...) With each passing day, the danger of the expansion of hostilities grows. The shadow of a nuclear war lies over Europe. But the world must not slide into a new great war. The world needs peace. The most important thing is to do everything for a quick cease-fire, to stop the Russian war of aggression and to find the way to negotiations.

The war has turned into a bloody war of positions in which there are only losers. A large part of our citizens do not want to see a spiral of violence without end. Instead of the dominance of the military, we need the language of diplomacy and peace. (...)" [1]

The former Ukrainian ambassador to Germany had already attracted attention with his drastic statements (about Chancellor Scholz: "insulted liver sausage") and his exorbitant demands for arms deliveries for Ukraine, which were made with great audacity. He also immediately intervened here via Twitter in a tone that certainly does not help Ukraine. Andriy Melnyk, promoted to deputy foreign minister of Ukraine, wrote on Twitter that Brandt and Co. should go to hell with their "senile ideas" of "achieving a quick ceasefire" and "making peace only with Russia." [2] No further comment on this

Signing opportunities for ceasefire and peace negotiations in Ukraine:

- Open letter to the German Chancellor

<https://www.change.org/p/offener-brief-an-bundeskanzler-scholz>

- Manifesto for Peace
<https://www.change.org/p/manifest-f%C3%BCr-frieden>
- Christmas Appeal
<https://www.christmasappeal.ipb.org/german-de/>
(ended in early 2023)
- Peace Appeal
<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/appeal-for-peace/>
- German-Austrian Appeal for Peace: The killing in Ukraine must be stopped!
<https://chnng.it/N2ggCS5Q>
- Appeal "Manifesto of the eighty-year-olds - the voice of the children of war on the war in Ukraine".
<https://www.change.org/p/ein-manifest-der-achtzigj%C3%A4hrigen-die-stimme-der-kriegskinder-zum-krieg-in-der-ukraine>

Furthermore, similar peace initiatives are known in the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Mexico, Brazil, the Czech Republic and Italy, among others.

THE PROPAGANDISTIC CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE 'MANIFESTO FOR PEACE'.

The Schwarzer and Schwarzer/Wagenknecht campaigns were able to draw on large networks and publication media that had been built up over many years. This explains - in addition to the high profile of the two personalities - the high number of signatories of these two peace texts.

Therefore, especially the 'Manifesto for Peace', which was linked to a large rally at the Brandenburg Gate, was the focus of public reactions.

The 'Manifesto for Peace' spoke out against an escalating continuation of the war in Ukraine and for immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations. It ends with the demand to the German Chancellor:

"We call on the German Chancellor to stop the escalation of arms deliveries. Now! He should lead a strong alliance for a ceasefire and peace negotiations at both the German and European levels. Now! Because every day lost costs up to 1,000 more lives - and brings us closer to a 3rd world war."

Four examples will now illustrate how attempts were made to falsify the text and the intentions of the two initiators and to discredit them.

1) The authors were accused in the media and by leading politicians of having written in the text of the manifesto that they were fundamentally opposed to the supply of weapons to support the self-defense of Ukraine under attack. [3]

The former Ukrainian ambassador to Germany, Andrij Melnyk, accordingly also expressed himself pejoratively: "Hello you two Putin's stooges:inside @SWagenknecht & #Schwarzer, you can roll up your manifesto for betrayal of Ukrainians & throw it straight into the trash garbage can at the Brandenburg Gate." [4]

But the fact is: In the text, the authors oppose the "escalation of arms deliveries," which is a different matter. This is about the crossing of 'red lines' that can lead to an uncontrollable escalation dynamic. Jürgen Habermas addressed this with his naming of tipping points, a 'point of no return'. [5]

2) the authors have been accused of a perpetrator-victim reversal. This accusation is first made by the German political scientist Herfried Münkler [6] and then repeated mantra-like by various politicians. Schwarzer/Wagenknecht are accused of primarily seeing NATO and the West as the aggressor and the Russian Federation as the

victim. This is also a misrepresentation, since the text of the manifesto clearly names the Russian aggressor. There it clearly states, "The Ukrainian people brutally invaded by Russia need our solidarity." [7]

Nevertheless, political scientist Münkler denounces the text as an "unconscionable manifesto" and Schwarzer/Wagenknecht "are doing Putin's business with ignorant talk." [8] [9]

3) Schwarzer/Wagenknecht are accused of wanting to hand over Ukraine to the Russian Federation via a Russian dictatorship peace. According to Foreign Minister Baerbock: "A dictatorial peace, as some are now calling for, that is not peace. Rather, it would be the subjugation of Ukraine to Russia." [10]

But the fact is that the manifesto states:

"Negotiating does not mean capitulating. Negotiating means compromising, on both sides. With the aim of preventing further hundreds of thousands of deaths and worse. That's what we think too, that's what half of the German population thinks. It is time to listen to us!" Such a formulation, however, is far from acceptance of a 'dictatorship peace'. [11]

4) Schwarzer/Wagenknecht were accused of not distinguishing themselves from right-wing extremism and of accepting that right-wing extremists would take part in the manifesto-related rally. [12]

This was also the verdict of 'Der Spiegel': "At the so-called peace demonstration in Berlin on Saturday, the contours of what Sahra Wagenknecht is actually striving for became apparent: a pro-Russian, anti-American, nationally oriented rallying movement. The AfD is reacting delightedly." [13]

Apart from the fact that it is impossible to prevent individual right-wing extremists from mingling with the crowd at a rally attended by more than 10,000 people, however, this accusation is also based on a false statement. For example, it is publicly documented via video recording that Sahra Wagenknecht, in her speech in front of the Brandenburg Gate, very clearly distanced herself from right-wing extremist participation with the following words:

"Of course, neo-Nazis and Reich citizens, who stand in the tradition of regimes responsible for the worst world wars in human history, have no place at our peace rally." [14]

Green Party co-chairman Omid Nouripour also demagogically distances himself in this direction and insinuates that the chairman of the AfD is one of the first signatories of the manifesto: "The chairman of the AfD is one of the first signatories of the manifesto. The Left Party must ask itself how it wants to deal with the fact that one of its best-known faces signs papers together with AfD chairmen." [15]

This statement is also wrong, because the AfD chairman is not one of the 69 first signers, but had mixed himself among the numerous co-signers, which certainly cannot be prevented in an open signing situation like at Change.org.

CONCLUSION

Peace activist Bernhard Trautvetter sums up the criticism of society's handling of the 'Manifesto for Peace' and the campaign against the peace movement as a whole in his own way:

"The campaign against the peace movement is based on invalid assertions, it corrodes democratic structures by excluding democrats, it strengthens war profiteers such as the arms corporations in the NATO states as well as nationalists such as those in the AfD, to which it gives attention by claiming that there is an alliance with their participation, it valorizes militarism by taking up its narratives. The campaign against the peace movement goes against the vital interests of people not only in our

country, because it increases tensions and the risks associated with the escalation of violence. And it distracts from many worldwide violations of international law in which NATO states are actively involved, for example, with the formulation that one is against war, as if there were no other wars in, say, the wider Gulf region or in Africa." [16]

Despite the repeated denials by Wagenknecht/ Schwarzer and other initial signatories of the 'Manifesto for Peace', the four false statements addressed here are permanently repeated by authoritative politicians, political scientists and the media. In particular, the reporting of this part of the bourgeois press is not an expression of independent and critical reporting, but rather evokes memories of 'embedded journalism'. In contrast, the media, as the self-appointed fourth authority in democracy, must be expected to weigh arguments of contrary peace policy positions independently and critically. All forms of 'embedded journalism' with elements of war propaganda and denigration of dissenters contradict the media's self-claim as the fourth power in a democracy - on the contrary, this represents an influence to undermine still existing democratic structures. [17]

Notes

[1] <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik-gesellschaft/frieden-fuer-die-ukraine-ein-friedensappell-aus-der-mitte-der-gesellschaft-li.332707>, 1.4.2023, 2.4.2023.

[2] <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/peter-brandt-initiiert-friedensappell-prominente-spd-mitglieder-unterschreiben-100.html>, 4/1/2023, 4/1/2023.

[3] See, e.g., <https://www.rnd.de/politik/manifest-fuer-frieden-junge-politiker-kontern-petition-von-wagenknecht-und-schwarzer-LDP5L5PETFBXJOEEHGMT4HSCY4.html>, 2/24/2023, 3/31/2023 or <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/open-source/kommentar-meinung-krieg-waffenlieferungen-ukraine-konflikt-ist-das-manifest-fuer-frieden-ein-manifest-der-unterwerfung-li.321476>, 2/25/2023.

[4] <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/annalena-baerbock-schmettert-ukraine-vorstoss-von-wagenknecht-und-schwarzer-ab-manifest-fuer-frieden-li.316625>, 11.2.2023, 3/30/2023.

[5] See his interview in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, where he argues for parallel political, humanitarian, and military support for Ukraine and for pushing ceasefire and peace negotiations in the sense of a dual strategy:

<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/projekte/artikel/kultur/juergen-habermas-ukraine-sz-verhandlungen-e159105/?reduced=true>, 2/14/2023, accessed 3/6/2023, (behind a paywall).

[6] Cf. https://rp-online.de/politik/deutschland/herfried-muenkler-nennt-wagenknecht-schwarzer-manifest-verlogen_aid-84912697, 2/14/2023, 3/31/2023.

[7] <https://www.change.org/p/manifest-f%C3%BCr-frieden>

[8] <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/gewissenloses-manifest-berliner-politologe-herfried-muenkler-verurteilt-friedensaufruf-von-alice-schwarzer-und-sahra-wagenknecht-li.317574>, 2/14/2023, 3/30/2023.

[9] Matthias Kreck critically examines Herfried Münkler's theses and concludes with the following summary: "Mr. Münkler's criticism does not stand up to scientific analysis. And when, in response to his very thoughtful article in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, he wishes his esteemed colleague Habermas were "a bit more of a political scientist," the question arises, in view of the scientific errors I point out in this article, whether colleague Münkler should attend the basic course on good scientific practice.",

in: <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/open-source/eine-kritik-an-der-kritik-von-herfried-muenkler-an-dem-manifest-fuer-frieden-li.320045>, 21.2.2023, 2.4.2023.

[10] <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/annalena-baerbock-schmettert-ukraine-vorstoss-von-wagenknecht-und-schwarzer-ab-manifest-fuer-frieden-li.316625>, 10.2.2023, 30.3.2023.

[11] <https://www.change.org/p/manifest-f%C3%BCr-frieden>

[12] Cf. <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/deutschland/politik/wagenknecht-schwarzer-manifest-frieden-afd-100.html>, 3/4/2023, 3/31/2023.

[13] <https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/kundgebung-in-berlin-querfront-ja-aber-bitte-diskret-kolumne-a-9abaaaab-c006-4cca-947a-f81465217086> 26.2.2023, 31.3.2023.

[14] Quote from YouTube original recording:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Sarah+Wagenknechts+speech+at+Brandenburg+Gate+2023+demarcation+against+right-wing+extremists&oq=Sarah+Wagenknechts+speech+at+Brandenburg+Gate+2023+demarcation+against+right-wing+extremists&aqs=chrome>.

.69i57.19759j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:7c9181da,vid:l0AwgCYNz5s, 25.3.2023, 30.3.2023.

[15] <https://www.rnd.de/politik/omid-nouripour-die-aeusserungen-von-frau-wagenknecht-wirken-in-der-ukraine-wie-hohn-E6KEVS7BMNAN5ABYGVOUZY4KIQ.html> , 2/24/2023, 3/31/2023.

[16] Quote from an as yet unpublished manuscript by Bernhard Trautvetter (3/2023): The Strategic Communication of the Military Lobby and the Campaign against the Peace Movement.

[17] In contrast to this, the journalistic approach of Malte Lehming in the Tagesspiegel, who poses five important questions to the peace policy opponents to be weighed up, is to be mentioned positively. Cf.

<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/internationales/deutschland-streitet-uber-den-richtigen-weg-zum-frieden-beide-seiten-mussen-funf-fragen-beantworten-9359345.html>, 16.2.2023, 31.3.2023.

From <https://www.klaus-moegling.de/actual-blogs/>, 2.4.2023