

Europe: “Being left means being on the side of the oppressed”

Wednesday 9 October 2024, by [BRESOLINI Marco](#), [RACKETE Carola](#), [ZELLER Christian](#) (Date first published: 4 October 2024).

Interview with European MP Carola Rackete, taken from the German-language site [emanzipation.org](#). We apologise for any translation issues.

“Being left-wing means being on the side of the oppressed, whether in Palestine, Kurdistan or Ukraine: That is why the EU must continue to supply weapons to Kyiv and allow attacks on Russian territory.” This is how former Sea-Watch captain Carola Rackete, who was elected to the EU Parliament as an independent on the DIE LINKE party list, explains why she voted for the European Parliament’s latest resolution on military support for Ukraine.

Marco Bresolini’s interview appeared on September 28, 2024 in the Italian daily newspaper [La Stampa](#). We would like to thank Carola Rackete for agreeing to publish the interview in German. The main contents of this resolution and some background information on the voting behavior of the members of “The Left” group in the EU Parliament are explained in a short attached article by Christian Zeller. Carola Rackete deserves broad support for her consistent stance.

• Did you do that [vote yes] to mark your dissent within the Left group?

“There are different positions in our group, and mine is based on that of the Scandinavian left-wing parties: Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Being left-wing means showing solidarity with the oppressed people and being against dictatorships, be it in Russia, Venezuela or Syria. You have to stand alongside these people and listen to their needs. I did that with the Ukrainians, with the progressive movements in the country: they are the ones who tell us how important it is that we get weapons to defend ourselves. That is why I voted for the resolution.”

• So are those wrong who say that supplying weapons only fuels war and pushes peace further away?

“But there is no peace without justice. If we stop supplying weapons, Ukraine will eventually be unable to defend itself and will be occupied by Russia. Millions of people will be forced to flee and millions will have to live in a dictatorship. Those who say that we should lay down our arms to achieve peace are not looking for justice. I want peace too, Ukrainians want peace too: they did not ask for an invasion! But we need a just peace. And the prerequisite for peace is that Putin withdraws his troops from Ukrainian territory. That is why we must support the call for self-defense that is coming from Kyiv.”

• Ukraine is also asking to be able to use Western weapons to hit military targets in Russia: almost all of your Italian colleagues voted against this point of the resolution, which is the government’s position, but you voted for it. And why?

“For two and a half years, Russia has been bombing civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, claiming innocent victims. If we want to help Ukrainians defend themselves effectively, we cannot tell them: wait until the rockets come across the border and fall on your heads. We must allow Ukrainians to destroy the military targets from which the attacks are emanating. That is what the resolution was about, I would never have voted for a text that calls for the bombing of civilians...”

• **So, in your opinion, should European governments lift the restrictions?**

“Many countries and people in Europe say they support Ukraine, but they do it with the handbrake on. If we agree on who is right and who is wrong, that is the only way we can act. I have always been critical of NATO, but in this case the situation is crystal clear: it is Russia that has invaded Ukraine, for the second time, after also invading Georgia. Putin does not recognize Ukraine’s sovereignty and wants to destroy it. There is a clearly oppressed people and it is our duty to help them defend themselves.”

• **But you did not vote for the deployment of Taurus missiles: did you also pull the handbrake?**

“This is a very controversial issue, especially in Germany, and I am not entirely convinced of it. But on this particular point I did not vote against it, but abstained.”

• **Has the war in Russia changed your attitude towards pacifism?**

“This war did not start in 2022, but in 2014. I was living in Russia at the time and visited Ukraine several times in the years before 2022. I saw with my own eyes how angry Ukrainians were at the EU for their lack of support and disinterest in a conflict that was going on in the east of the country. I had enough time to think about this conflict.”

“I continue to criticise NATO for the mistakes it has made, especially in North Africa or the former Yugoslavia. But being left-wing means being on the side of the oppressed, whether in Palestine, Kurdistan or Ukraine. I stand with the people of Hong Kong and Taiwan, for the right to self-determination and for democracy. It is not a question of East or West, of Russia or NATO. It is a question of imperialism. You have to help the weaker to defend themselves against abuse by the stronger, and Russia is clearly stronger than Ukraine.”

• **Aren’t you afraid of Putin’s nuclear threats?**

“I think it’s a bluff. We often forget that the only ones who dropped a nuclear bomb were the United States, Russia never did it.”

• **In your opinion, is the EU not active enough to support Kyiv?**

“The sanctions that have been adopted are disappointing because they are inadequate and ridiculous. We continue to import fossil fuels such as gas and thus continue to finance Russia’s war. The sanctions should be stricter and more targeted. Civil society should also do more to better understand the situation and the economic difficulties of Ukrainians: there is a lot of capitalist speculation in the reconstruction of Ukraine.”

Where is the European Left going? With Carola Rackete!

On 19 September, the EU Parliament approved by a large majority (425 in favour, 131 against, 63 abstentions) the resolution “Continued financial and military support to Ukraine by EU Member States” [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) .

The members of the Left group voted unanimously: 20 MEPs rejected the resolution, 9 voted for it and 12 abstained. Carola Rackete, who was elected to the EU Parliament in June this year as an independent on the DIE LINKE party list, voted yes together with the left-wing MEPs from the Nordic countries. Carola Rackete became internationally known in 2019 as the captain of the rescue ship Seawatch 3, when she saved many refugees and defied the then Italian Interior Minister.

This resolution demands:

1. that the EU and its Member States work towards ‘maintaining and achieving the broadest possible international support for Ukraine and finding a peaceful solution to the war, which must be based on full respect for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the principles of international law, accountability for war crimes and the crime of aggression, and reparations and other payments by Russia for the massive damage caused in Ukraine; calls for a strong EU engagement in implementing Ukraine’s peace formula and in laying the groundwork for holding the second peace summit.’
2. supplying Ukraine with sufficient ammunition and allowing Ukrainian attacks against military infrastructure in Russia;
3. enforcing and expanding military sanctions against Russia and those who support Russia;
4. the confiscation of Russian state assets to compensate Ukraine for the destruction;
5. the enforcement of a complete embargo on liquefied natural gas from Russia and sanctions against Gazprom and Russian oil companies;
6. that all EU Member States and NATO Allies should jointly and individually commit to spending at least 0.25% of their GDP annually on military support to Ukraine.

The second demand is that Ukraine should also be allowed to attack missile launchers in Russia with NATO weapons. This has so far been prohibited and means that the population cannot be effectively protected against the Russian hail of bombs. However, the resolution fits into the general, highly problematic EU and NATO policy. [\[3\]](#) Nevertheless, from a solidarity, ecological and emancipatory perspective, it is justified to agree to this resolution and Carola Rackete explains her agreement clearly and comprehensibly in an interview with the Italian newspaper La Stampa.

The following MPs voted in favour: Andersson, Kyllönen and Saramo from the Finnish Vasemmistoliitto (Left Party), Clausen from the Danish red-green Enhedslisten, Gedin and Sjöstedt from the Swedish Vänsterpartiet (Left Party), Hazekamp from the Dutch Partij voor de Dieren (Party for the Animals), Omarjee from France Insoumise and Rackete as an independent from Germany.

The eight MEPs who voted no were Antoci, Della Valle, Furore, Morace, Palmisano, Pedullà, Tamburrano and Tridico from the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle and Salis from the Sinistra Italiana (Italian Left), Arvanitis from the Greek Syriza, Barrena Arza from the Basque El Bildu, Botenga and Kennes from the Belgian Partij van der Arbeid (Labour Party), Montero and Serra Sánchez from Podemos and Galán from Sumar (both Spain), Martins from the Bloco de Esquerda and Oliveira from the Partido Comunista Português (both Portugal), Everding from the German Animal Protection Party and Demirel from DIE LINKE.

Abstaining were MEPs Aubry, Carême, Chaibi, Fourreau, Hassan, Measure, Saeidi, Smith (all from France Insoumise), Boylan and Funchion from Sinn Féin and Flanagan (independent) from Ireland

and Schirdewan from DIE LINKE.

What is striking is the great weight of the politically elusive populist Five Star Movement, which sometimes also represents right-wing positions. In 2019, for example, it supported the racist policies of the then Interior Minister Salvini and his attacks on the sea rescue of Carola Rackete.

The newspaper Junge Welt, which has been a mouthpiece for Russian imperialism for years, launched a vicious campaign against Carola Rackete after the vote, which was also joined on social media by members of the DIE LINKE party and employees of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

Those who slander and distort Carola Rackete and who even accuse her, absurdly and unrealistically, of encouraging a world war with her position, consistently refuse to give an answer as to how Ukrainian wage earners can defend themselves against the Russian attack on their society.

These slanderous attacks against Carola Rackete do not serve the cause of peace, but ultimately play into the hands of the Putin regime's blackmail attempts and are grist to the mill of racists, national conservatives and fascists across Europe. The inclusion of the members of the populist Italian Five Star Movement in the Left Group in the EU Parliament shifts its orientation significantly to the right and indicates that a number of forces deliberately do not want to draw a clear line between themselves and national sovereignist positions.

Carola Rackete has proven enough in recent years that she is determined and effective in opposing fascist, racist and national conservative forces. She has saved many people from the worst threats. Which of the malicious writers has already successfully stood up to a racist interior minister and his repressive forces? Carola Rackete stands for consistent resistance to racism and is fighting resolutely for the dismantling and socialization of the fossil fuel industries.

It is right to oppose the wave of arms buildup by NATO and EU states. This can be done credibly if one simultaneously shows solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance against the existential threat posed by Russian imperialism. We have also stated this in our international declaration " *Ukraine: A People's Peace not an Imperial Peace* " . [4]

That is why it is right to support Ukraine, that is why we must oppose arms exports to other states that attack their own and neighboring populations (eg Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia). That is why the arms industry must be nationalized in order to democratically control it and determine its products; finally, it must be dismantled in a transnationally coordinated manner or converted into a socially and ecologically useful industry.

I have presented some further considerations in the article "Peace in Ukraine and ecosocialist perspectives in Europe" in *e manzipation* . It is obvious that we urgently need to start a transnational and European discussion about these challenges. [5]

references

The interview appeared on September 28, 2024 in the Italian daily newspaper [La Stampa](#) and was translated by Christian Zeller.

Image source: Maintain your position and attitude – especially in times of increasing crisis! Photo based on [Jon Tyson](#) on [Unsplash](#) .

Carola Rackete

Marco Bresolini

Christian Zeller

[Click here](#) to subscribe to ESSF newsletters in English and or French.

P.S.

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign

<https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org/2024/10/04/being-left-means-being-on-the-side-of-the-oppressed/?s=09>

Footnotes

[1] European Parliament, 19 September 2024: P10_TA(2024)0012. Continued financial and military support to Ukraine by EU Member States

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0012_EN.pdf

[2] MEPs: Ukraine must be able to strike legitimate military targets in Russia. Press Release 19. September 2024 MEPs: Ukraine must be able to strike legitimate military targets in Russia | News | European Parliament (europa.eu)

[3] Minutes – Results of roll-call votes. Thursday, 19 September 2024 – Strasbourg Continued financial and military support to Ukraine by EU Member States

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PV-10-2024-09-19-RCV_EN.html?fbclid=IwY2xjaWVmG39leHRuA2FlbQlXMAABHUVXoHMr0rVWuR-bvF8vTNNM3CT8BS6AaqhJqe2bO_YxGOhPG5jVW3xVYg_aem_XUPNEi44pJXWU5AfY0KtuQ#169676#959974

[4] International declaration in German and 14 other languages: Ukraine: A People's Peace not an Imperial Peace . <https://emanzipation.org/2024/06/a-peoples-peace-not-an-imperial-peace/> English version with list of signatories, July 6, 2024:

https://emanzipation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2024_07_09_Ukraine_peace_conference_declaration_endorsements.pdf

[5] Christian Zeller, July 25, 2024: Peace in Ukraine and ecosocialist perspectives in Europe.

<https://emanzipation.org/2024/07/frieden-in-der-ukraine-und-oekosozialistische-perspektiven-in-europa/>