

Speech by Lothar Bisky, Chairman of DIE LINKE,  
during the general debate of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Party of the European Left,  
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## **A European Left, developing alternatives**

Dear comrades and distinguished guests!

Our meeting here in Prague, as the Party of the European Left, together with the Czech Democratic Socialists and our comrades from the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, shows that plurality has become the guiding principle of left-wing politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have the ability to become an open party project. We have embarked upon a path of placing our commonalities at the centre of our political working, without forgetting our differences. This is not always easy. We know that from the process of forming the party 'Die Linke' in Germany. As an anti-war party we have a clear social profile. We have thrown the seemingly oh-so-settled German party system into utter disarray. And how: we have more than 10% approval in the opinion polls. The population wants us.

We know how closely the development of Germany is interwoven with the EU. This is the reason for our commitment to alternative politics through the framework of the Party of the European Left, and our active involvement with the faction in the European Parliament.

Rampant capitalism has broadened its profile in Germany and in Europe. The key concepts are: deep social division, work without rights, surveillance instead of security, the privatisation of water and education. These things are destroying the opportunity for European integration. It seems absurd. At this time, when trust in neoliberalism is disappearing, its cynical philosophy of individual responsibility looms large in the everyday. The destructive traces of wage lowering, social deconstruction and environmental damage stick like cement to new political debates and challenges. In 2007, Government chiefs in Europe have allowed themselves simply to ignore the 'no' in France, the 'no' in the Netherlands, and the struggles against Bolkestein. European isolation and armament are the grim results of a loss of solidarity and sustainability, a loss of political integration in Europe.

It is clear why we have come to Prague. We do not want a Europe of bureaucrats, but one where the citizens negotiate their rights openly, where they determine their own lives. A European Left that develops alternatives – this is the proposal that we are formulating in our political theses.

For us, it depends on the following:

The basis of a European social state is the historic potential of the continent. The workers' movement, the women's movement, political activists, the trade unions and social movements have all campaigned for life and labour in dignity, for men, women and immigrants, even recently. We are contributing to their efforts.

An all-embracing history of democracy, the Enlightenment, and the open debate on the nature of government in Europe belongs to European culture. Without referenda on the Reform Treaty, the Europe which belongs to its citizens will be gambled away day by day.

The devastating consequences of economic liberalism and armament do not belong in the European treaty, but in open discussion, where they can finally be overcome.

The European Left has a long tradition of anti-fascism, which we must take up once again. We must not forget that.

For these reasons we say: no more war! That goes for us worldwide, in the Near East, in Northern Iraq, in Afghanistan. Everywhere. We do not need a US missile shield, in Poland or in the Czech Republic.

We want a European way of thinking that includes Russia, with its cultural and political experiences.

We need a Europe that uses its internal market, its cultural diversity and the modern media for peace and democratic development worldwide. I have come to Prague to lay open all the potential for our common working. I am setting up the exchange of political practices in networks, in cooperations, in parliaments. And I would like us, going forth from Prague, to build on the left's political capabilities, and prove them in the European elections in 2009.