

Germany: Marx21's Janine Wissler elected to Left Party leadership

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At the recent Left Party congress in Berlin, a member of the pseudo-left Marx21 tendency, Janine Wissler, was voted into the position of new vice chairperson of the party. She won 83 percent of the delegates' votes, by far the best result of the four candidates. Wissler follows in the footsteps of Sahra Wagenknecht, who is standing down as deputy chair.

The various currents within the Left Party and the mainstream media welcomed her election. *Spiegel Online* called her "the new little star of the party ... photogenic and a good speaker".

Thomas Kreuzmann, head of the regional studio of Hessischer Rundfunk, said: "Ms. Wissler is young and has a pleasant appearance," making her a sought-after asset for talk shows.

A portrait of Wissler in the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) daily, titled "Fighter for the Class Struggle in the German Government," praises her to the skies. She is considered reliable and down to earth. The workings of her charm is well above average, without herself succumbing to the charm of others (unless it be the Greek leftist Alexis Tsipras). Apart from that she is very constructive in comparison to others."

Who is Janine Wissler and why does she evoke such enthusiasm?

At its Berlin congress, the Left Party consolidated itself as a mainstream establishment party ready to take over the reins of government at a national level. Not only does the Left Party line up clearly with business and the widely despised European Union, the party also agrees with the federal government on all the basic questions of foreign policy.

In April, Left Party deputies voted for the first time to support an overseas deployment of the German army (Bundeswehr). It plays a key role in the imperialist offensive against Russia. Together with all other parliamentary parties, it denounces Russia's actions as illegal. Its parliamentary chairman, Gregor Gysi, explicitly lined up behind NATO and its principle of collective response at the congress, despite the fact that this brings the party into open conflict

with the mass of the population which is opposed to militarism.

Under these conditions, Janine Wissler's precipitous ascent within the party is no coincidence. Her role is to give the party's right-wing course a "left face," while aggressively pressing ahead with the current line.

She is a member of the Marx21 group—a political tendency inside the Left Party prominently associated with its right-wing course. She also has links to various protest and trade union circles. She can swim along with the followers of Blockupy, Attac, the Verdi trade union, or the Frankfurt Monday demonstrations against aircraft noise. These are precisely the petty-bourgeois layers she seeks to mobilize in support of the party's right wing turn.

Wissler has already demonstrated her reliability to the ruling class. She was the leading candidate of the Left Party in the Hessian state parliament in 2008—the year of the global financial crisis, when major German banks received billions from the government with the Left Party's support. To claw back these billions from the population, the Hessian Left Party supported an SPD-Green minority government led by Andrea Ypsilanti. Though the government eventually collapsed due to sabotage from the ranks of the SPD, the Left Party for its part remained loyal to the coalition.

Since then, Wissler has been a firm advocate of SPD-Green austerity measures. After the Hessian state elections last autumn, she "fought" vigorously for a SPD-Green state government. In exploratory coalition discussions with the SPD and the Greens, she made her own proposals for cuts.

When the Greens then decided to form an alliance with the conservative CDU, Wissler sent an angry tweet to Tarek al-Wazir, the Green Party chairman and designated Hessian Minister of Economics: "I would be interested to know what you identify as issues that supposedly make the Left Party unable or unwilling to govern." Her remark made clear that no "substantive issues" separated the Left Party from the other bourgeois parties.

Wissler used the election campaign to establish close links with business representatives and political circles in the

financial center of Frankfurt and signal the party's reliability. At a reception given by the local Chamber of Industry and Commerce, she praised the Left Party as a representative of business interests: "Yes, of course it comes down to relieving the load [for entrepreneurs]. I speak a lot with entrepreneurs Entrepreneurs and private initiative are certainly also represented in our program."

Wissler easily adapted to the anti-communism of her audience. Asked by a reporter who moderated the reception whether East Germany was "a dictatorship in your opinion," she replied in the affirmative. Asked if a revolution was needed, she assured the business elite in attendance: "Revolutions have always been driving forces of history. For the next few years, however, that does not appear to be on the cards."

Wissler has nothing in common with leftist, revolutionary or Trotskyist politics. From the start, she made her political career in the milieu of right-wing bourgeois politics. At the age of seventeen, she joined the group Linksruck as it helped promote the SPD candidate for chancellor, Gerhard Schröder.

She joined the SPD's Young Socialists and then the Election Alternative group, WASG, which broke with the SPD. In 2007 Linksruck transformed itself into the Marx21 network inside the Left Party, and Wissler's career as a bourgeois politician took off.

After working in the offices of various WASG and trade union bureaucrats, Wissler was elected to the Hessian state parliament in 2008, with a monthly taxable income of nine thousand euros. In the meantime, she also sits on three parliamentary committees.

The stated goal of Linksruck and Marx21 is to "influence" bourgeois parties, claiming one can "push them to the left"—a political lie aimed at subordinating the working class to right-wing, anti-worker policies. Supported by Linksruck, the Schröder-led former SPD-Green government introduced the Agenda 2010 and Hartz IV laws, involving the most far-reaching attacks on social rights in Germany since World War II.

Now, Marx21 is one of the tendencies within the Left Party backing Berlin's aggressive foreign policy, as articulated by the German President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) at the Munich Security Conference at the start of this year.

Immediately after the conference, another leading member of Marx21, Christine Buchholz, flew with von der Leyen to review German troops in Africa. Since 2009, Buchholz has sat on the defense committee of the Bundestag for the Left Party and is involved in the government's war policy at the highest level. Now, this policy change is being put onto

practice in the current offensive against Russia in Ukraine.

Marx21 plays a central role. It celebrated the right-wing coup in Ukraine as a "democratic revolution" and defends collaboration with the fascist forces utilized by German and US imperialism to pursue their geo-strategic interests and prepare massive attacks on the working class.

On their website, Marx21 published an interview with Ilya Budraitskis, a member of the pseudo-left Russian Socialist Movement, who glorified the fascists as the "bravest and literally most militant sections of the movement." He praised them, he noted, because no one proceeded so offensively against the police as the ultra-right". When asked whether he would "discuss with Nazis", Budraitskis replied: "Maybe with some of them."

In the preparations war with Russia, Marx21 is assuming the role of the ideological spearhead. Alongside the German government and NATO, it declares that Russia bears the ultimate responsibility for the crisis and describes the Putin regime as "imperialistic". Volkhard Mosler, Wissler's mentor and one of the leading representatives of the group, wrote recently that the "occupation of Ukraine by Russian troops "was a" brazen and cynical act by Russian imperialism."

The right-wing policies of Marx21 and its predecessor Linksruck flows directly from the tradition they embody. Marx21 is affiliated to the International Socialist Tendency (IST) founded by Tony Cliff, which broke with Trotskyism over sixty years ago. At that time Cliff and his followers denounced the Soviet Union as "state capitalist" and refused to defend it against attack by the imperialist powers.

Since then, the state capitalists and the affluent middle classes they represent have shifted further and further to the right. Today they play a key role in the attacks carried out on the working class and the preparations for imperialist war against Russia.

Wissler's election by a large majority as deputy chair of the Left Party should be taken as a warning to workers. The Left Party is underlining that it stands firmly behind the government's war policy and is prepared to enforce them against all popular resistance.



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