

Germany: Common ground between Left Party leader Wagenknecht and the far-right AfD

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While leading Christian Democratic politicians are drumming up support for a coalition with Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Left Party in particular is playing a key role in integrating the far-right party into the official party spectrum and making it acceptable. The latest example of this development is a two-page illustrated interview in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* (FAS) with Sahra Wagenknecht and AfD chairwoman Frauke Petry.

Wagenknecht heads the parliamentary faction of the Left Party in the Bundestag and had already come to notice earlier with a tirade against refugees—for which she was expressly praised by AfD vice-president Alexander Gauland. Wagenknecht's appearance alongside Petry in the FAS newspaper represents a new quantitative step. It underscores the fact that the Left Party is not only able to work with those parties that introduced the anti-social Hartz-IV laws—the SPD and Greens—but also with the extreme right.

The extent of the political agreement between Wagenknecht and Petry was reflected in the FAS headline: “For the first time the Left Party's Sahra Wagenknecht and the AfD chief Frauke Petry meet. They talk about refugees, patriotism, free trade. And they are often closer to each other than one would have thought. ‘The conversation’ developed rapidly, resembled in part a great opposition coalition,” noted the conservative paper.

In fact, there is consensus between the two protagonists over long stretches in the interview—and the consensus is very right-wing. Wagenknecht begins the interview by attacking the German government's policy in the manner of the AfD—i.e., from the right: “If so many people come to Germany as they did last

autumn because of Merkel's policy, then it is also necessary to ensure that integration is successful and the necessary housing or jobs are available.”

The Left Party had “made the mistake of giving the wrong impression that we were behind Angela Merkel's chaotic politics,” Wagenknecht declared. The demand in the party programme “Open Borders for All” is merely “a good demand for a world of the future.” Nobody “today wants to close the border with France or Austria. But there are prerequisites for open borders.”

Just like Petry, Wagenknecht counterposes refugees—coming to Europe mainly because of the wars triggered by the imperialist powers (not a single word said on the topic by Wagenknecht)—to workers in Germany. Many refugees are “looking for work” in the low-wage sector and “are thus” exerting pressure on wages. It is similar “with regard to housing. The refugees are looking for accommodation especially in those parts of the city where the poor are already living.”

The sharpest criticism made by Wagenknecht of the AfD came clearly from the right. When the AfD refers to “the founding fathers of the social market economy” in its programme, it should be aware that “Those economists wanted a strong state that would regulate business and guarantee social security. You want a weak state. ...”

Wagenknecht's calls for a “strong state” have little in common with the limited social concessions of the conservative era of post-war chancellor Adenauer. Rather she advocates a massive buildup of the state apparatus. It was only at the end of September that Wagenknecht declared, also in the *Frankfurter*

Allgemeine, “We have always criticised the dismantling of police personnel.” And further: “We are not the party of a weak state, but want a state sufficiently equipped to fulfil its tasks. This includes ensuring the safety of its citizens.”

In her last book, *Wealth Without Greed*, Wagenknecht also argued for nationalism and a strong state. The market economy needs a strong national state, she wrote, a nation-state, which separates itself from others and is linguistically and ethnically homogeneous.

On occasion, Wagenknecht sought to put some ground between herself and the AfD chairwoman. For her part, Petry went out of her way to stress the “very strong overlaps” between the two. Among other things, she shares Wagenknecht’s criticisms “of the EU and her allegiance to the nation state.” At one point, she appealed to Wagenknecht: “We should talk more.” The interview ends with a plea by Petry for “a timely collaboration on concrete issues.”

Irrespective of the precise nature of any such future “collaboration,” the interview speaks volumes about the real character of the Left Party. In the mouthpiece of the German banks, Wagenknecht is signalling to the ruling class that, under conditions of extreme capitalist crisis, she and the Left Party are prepared to back military rearmament and preparations for war on an extremely right-wing and nationalist basis against the working class.



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