

German Left Party leader blames Merkel's refugee policy for attack in Berlin

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Since the attack on a Christmas market in Berlin on December 19, 2016, politicians from all of the German parliamentary parties have been vying with each other in their demands for a massive increase in state powers and a harsher crackdown on refugees.

The most recent highpoint of this right-wing campaign was an interview with the parliamentary group leader of the Left Party, Sahra Wagenknecht, in the weekly magazine *Stern*.

Wagenknecht ascribes “shared responsibility” to Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU, Christian Democratic Union) for the terrorist attack in Berlin. “There is a shared responsibility, but it is more complex,” said Wagenknecht. “In addition to the uncontrolled opening up of the [German] borders, the police have been cut to the bone, having neither the staff nor technical equipment appropriate to the risk situation.”

Wagenknecht's call for expanding the police, her cheap propaganda against refugees and her attack on the Merkel government from the right hardly differ from the hate slogans of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Consequently, she promptly received praise from the ranks of the extreme right-wing party.

Markus Pretzell, the North Rhine Westphalian state chair of the AfD, and the partner to party chair Frauke Petry, shared Wagenknecht's positions on Twitter and described her as a “wise woman”. Pretzell himself had already sent a provocative Tweet shortly after the attack reading, “These are Merkel's dead!”

Although it is now clear that the suspected assassin, Anis Amri, prepared his crime under the noses of the security agencies and was possibly even actively supported by them in order to precipitate a sharp political turn to the right in Germany, Wagenknecht says not a single word about the dubious role of the secret services. Instead, she positions herself at the head

of a right-wing campaign and agitates against Merkel's refugee policy in best AfD style.

In the *Stern* interview, she castigates “the uncontrolled opening up of the [German] borders, which has been criticised throughout Europe”. Although there is “a fundamental right to asylum” in Germany, it was “irresponsible” to “allow a situation where we do not even know who is coming into the country”.

Wagenknecht further asserted that Merkel's “uncontrolled opening of the borders created an incentive” and “lured many refugees into the country” thereby generating “a lot of uncertainty and anxiety” and boosting the AfD.

In response to the remark by *Stern* that Wagenknecht was herself advancing AfD positions, and had been challenged to join the AfD by the “spokesman of the ethnic-national wing”, André Poggenburg, she answered angrily: “Shall we cede sovereignty over our positions to the AfD? Can anything that a Poggenburg could concoct, whether right or wrong, no longer be said? That is absurd. We cannot just pretend it was easy to integrate one million people. If we leave the definition of the problems to the AfD, then good night!”

In reality, the Left Party itself bears full responsibility for the growth of the AfD—and this is true in many respects. First, as a party of government—currently in Brandenburg, Thuringia and Berlin—it has helped create the social misery driving many workers, especially in eastern Germany, into despair.

Second, the fact that it pursues right-wing, capitalist policies under the label of being a “left-wing” party creates political frustrations that can be exploited by right-wing demagogues.

Under conditions of a deepening social and political

crisis in Germany and internationally, Wagenknecht and the Left Party increasingly rely on the open xenophobia and nationalism of the extreme right to divide the working class and advance the interests of the German banks and big business against their international competitors.

Asked by *Stern* if as a government politician in a possible SPD-Left Party-Green government there was anything she “would not change in this country under any circumstances, because it is so fantastic”, Wagenknecht responded: “Some things are actually better in Germany than anywhere else. Take the savings banks (Sparkasse), which still halfway know, in contrast to Deutsche Bank, that their job is to be a servant of the real economy.”

Speaking to *Stern* regarding foreign policy, Wagenknecht advocated Berlin take an independent line from the US and Russia. “Let’s not kid ourselves, both the US and Russia operate an imperial policy. Both have not intervened in the Middle East because they are concerned with human rights and democracy. But for zones of influence.” In Syria, undoubtedly, “war crimes were committed by Russia too”, but the indignation of German politicians regarding civilian casualties was “fairly implausible” as long as Merkel “keeps sending the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces] into new wars; and making possible US drone murders with German logistics”.

To put it plainly: Wagenknecht criticises the Bundeswehr war missions mainly because they are (still) heavily subordinated to American war policy. Once, however, it comes to the implementation of the interests of German imperialism against Washington and Moscow, Wagenknecht will have just as little scruple about sending German soldiers on combat missions abroad and trampling international law and human rights underfoot, as the representatives of the Merkel government.

As part of her campaign for a possible coalition with the SPD and Greens—the parties that instigated massive attacks on welfare and workers’ rights, and sent Germany to war for the first time since 1945—Wagenknecht and the Left Party are building links with high-ranking German military figures.

For example, in September last year, the Left Party parliamentary group invited the former inspector general of the Bundeswehr and chairman of the NATO

Military Committee, Harald Kujat, to their group meeting in Hanover. According to media reports, the invitation of the former highest-ranking German officer was a direct initiative of group chair Wagenknecht.

In June, there will be a joint appearance at Ettersburg Castle of Wagenknecht with the right-wing Humboldt Professor Jörg Baberowski, who enjoys close ties to the army, and, among other things, worked for the Military History Research Office (MGFA) on two publications intended as “mission orientation” for German soldiers. Baberowski has acted as a mouthpiece of the extreme right, incessantly railing against refugees and several times calling for Merkel to resign.

Significantly, the subject of the “Ettersburg dialogue” between Wagenknecht and Baberowski is the centenary of the October Revolution. What brings the former Stalinist Wagenknecht and ex-Maoist Baberowski together, in addition to their rejection of refugees and their penchant for a “strong state,” is their hostility towards an independent revolutionary movement of the working class, which, in 1917 in Russia under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, foremost Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, conquered political power and overthrew capitalism.



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