

Germany: Left Party leader ready to cooperate with far-right AfD

Verena Nees
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In an interview on German television last Thursday, Sahra Wagenknecht, the leading candidate of the Left Party for this month's federal election, issued a clear call for cooperation with the far right Alternative for Germany (AfD). In the interview she said: "What one should not do is turn the AfD into a victim by generally excluding or dealing with it in an unfair way."

She made clear that her remarks referred explicitly to possible posts in the Bundestag presidium or parliamentary committees following the election. "In this case one should also look at who is standing for what and not judge out of hand," Wagenknecht said, signaling that the Left Party was prepared to support the election of AfD candidates to such bodies.

Commenting on the chances of a majority vote at the election for a so-called red-red-green (Social Democrat-Left Party-Green Party) coalition Wagenknecht declared: "If you look at the polls you cannot seriously and publicly maintain that the chances are good for red-red-green. "Sadly, the SPD has screwed up," she told the N24 television channel, which is part of the right-wing Axel Springer media group.

The media hype surrounding former EU bureaucrat Martin Schulz, the SPD's lead election candidate and a man seen by the Left Party as a possible entry ticket for its involvement in federal government, has now collapsed completely. The SPD continues to be a party hated by broad layers of the population, and particularly by workers, for its Agenda 2010 program, which forced millions into cheap wage labour and precarious working conditions.

The Left Party's hopes for a future red-red-green coalition had already been dampened by the massive loss of support for the SPD in this year's state election in Saarland, which also resulted in a defeat for Oskar Lafontaine, a founding member of the Left Party and

former SPD finance minister.

The Saarland debacle was followed by further defeats for the SPD in Schleswig-Holstein, and especially in North-Rhine Westphalia, once the industrial heartland of the Social Democrats. Schulz reacted to these setbacks by taking a sharp turn to the right. He dropped all his previous talk of "social justice" and placed himself at the head of a law and order campaign, demanding more police. At the same time he took up typical AfD demands directed against refugees.

The Left Party is now taking the same path and shifting further to the right. Taking the lead, Sahra Wagenknecht has made clear that all the Left Party's talk of "opposing the right wing" is just that—empty talk.

This was already evident in the so-called "Five-party round table"—a television debate which included the Left Party, the Greens, the conservative Christian Social Union, the neo liberal Free Democratic Party and the AfD, represented by its lead candidate Alice Weidel.

In the course of the debate Sahra Wagenknecht stressed that the Left Party also favoured the deportation of "delinquent foreigners," thereby repeating her earlier statement that those "who abuse the right of hospitality" had forfeited the right to hospitality.

The end of the round of questions then witnessed a friendly exchange between Wagenknecht and the AfD's Alice Weidel, after the latter had given free rein to her xenophobic and authoritarian standpoints.

Wagenknecht told Weidel: "I do not share your views regarding many of the things you have said, but they are part of a democratic discourse, issues which one can talk about, they are conservative positions." She then asked Weidel "how well" she felt about the neo-racist

Björn Höcke and other “half Nazis” who feature prominently on the AfD’s list of election candidates.

Laughingly, Weidel replied: “Just like you, in your party, Frau Wagenknecht, there are also individual cases like Höcke in the AfD. She then boasted that the AfD’s list of candidates contained more academics than any other party. These candidates, she maintained, would prove to be “competent” and “constructive for sustainable policy” in all committees.

Sahra Wagenknecht has now taken up this offer from the AfD politician as the basis for the future work of the Left Party in its role as an opposition party.

This must be a warning for young people and workers intent on voting against the far right AfD in the coming election. The Left Party is not an instrument for preventing the rise of nationalist and fascist tendencies. It would be naive to believe the party will move to the left as a party in opposition after the federal election.

In this respect the experience in Greece in 2015 is instructive. Following the election victory of Syriza, Alexis Tsipras, whom the German Left Party still maintain is the leader of a progressive government, formed a coalition with the right-wing populist Independent Greeks (Anel). The resulting policies have led to social catastrophe for the Greek population.

Wagenknecht's offer to the AfD has its roots in the nationalist and pro-capitalist orientation of the Left Party. Its predecessor, the Party of Democratic Socialism, emerged from the ruling East German Stalinist Socialist Unity Party (SED), which espoused a thoroughly nationalist policy at home and abroad - despite all its talk of socialism and international solidarity. At home the party discriminated against foreign workers from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, and internationally against the workers of other countries, in particular the US.

During the period of capitalist reunification in 1989-90 the SED/PDS actively supported the reintroduction of the capitalist profit-system in the GDR. Some years later the PDS amalgamated with a group of long standing trade union and SPD bureaucrats in West Germany led by the former SPD finance minister, Oskar Lafontaine, to form the Left Party. Wagenknecht is married to Lafontaine.

The nationalist and pro-capitalist character of the Left Party comes strikingly to the fore in the present political situation, as the danger of war grows daily,

conflicts between Germany and the US are intensifying and popular opposition to war and poverty is increasing.

In foreign policy, the Left Party poses as a German nationalist party against the United States. Recently, on his Facebook page, Lafontaine explained that the Left Party was the only one that “did not swim in the obedient wake of the only remaining world power.” In the Bundestag, irrespective of the form of the governing coalition, the party will insist that “the interests of Germany and Europe be defended more strongly than the “unfair” goals of the US.”

In the sphere of domestic politics the party supports and implements social cuts, police rearmament and the rigorous deportation of refugees. This has been the experience of the Left Party in power in the German states of Berlin, Brandenburg, Thuringia, and also in East German municipal administrations. The red-red-green Senate in Berlin, formed last winter as a role model for a future federal red-red-green coalition, repudiated the Left Party’s election slogan of a “change of policy” within the space of a few months. It is this right wing policy of the Left Party which plays into the hands of the AfD.

The coming struggles against war, capitalist exploitation and police oppression must also take the form of a struggle against the Left Party. Young people and workers must build a genuine socialist, international and revolutionary workers' party, which combines the struggle against war with the struggle against capitalism. This is the perspective of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP).



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