

Germany's Left Party drums up support for coalitions with the Social Democrats and Greens

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Last week, we wrote that the Left Party would use its party congress to “set an even more direct course towards government participation and support for war.” This assessment has been fully confirmed with the election of Janine Wissler and Susanne Hennig-Wellsow as new chairpersons and their public appearances since then.

At their first joint press conference on Monday, the two made clear what lies behind the new party motto “Awakening in a new era”—a government alliance with the pro-war and pro-austerity Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens now also at federal level. “If we can negotiate it reasonably, we will be ready to take responsibility,” Hennig-Wellsow said. “In principle,” she added, “we are called upon to modify policies for people in the here and now.”

Wissler also advocated government participation. “I just want to point out that the Left Party in Hesse had also negotiated an agreement to support the SPD and Green Party [state executive] in 2008.” As is well known, this “then failed, but not because of the Left Party.” In 2013, she said, there had also been “exploratory talks with the SPD and Greens in Hesse.” She had “been involved in both” and was now “ready to compromise.” In the case of there being a “majority for the SPD, the Left Party and the Greens after the federal elections,” “of course all three parties have a responsibility to talk about whether a change in policy direction can be created from this majority.”

In fact, despite all the claims of the new party leadership, a so-called “red-red-green” coalition would not represent a “progressive alliance” for a “change of policy” but would continue the reactionary course of the present grand coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats. A look at Bremen, Thuringia and Berlin is enough to prove this. Wherever the Left Party already governs with the SPD and the Greens, it is cutting education and health, deporting refugees, stepping up state powers and pursuing a murderous herd immunity policy.

Towards the end of the press conference, Hennig-Wellsow

candidly stated that the Left Party was also prepared, if necessary, to push through its anti-working-class policies with the nominally right-wing parties. Asked whether “a little more pragmatism” was needed regarding government alliances, she said, “In Thuringia, [our] red-red-green minority government is tolerated by the CDU.” Due to the specific circumstances on the ground, cooperation was “a must.”

What followed was a declaration of bankruptcy by a party capable of anything. At the moment, “the CDU in Thuringia is putting together a budget, which may mean that ... we will have to cut budgets next year. That means cutting social benefits.” For the Left Party, this is not a reason to end cooperation with the CDU but to push through the cuts. “In Thuringia, this is possible. We can organise it humanly, but politically, we have very, very big differences,” Hennig-Wellsow said.

In another cynical attempt to distance the Left Party from its de facto government partner, she said that the CDU was not to be “trusted when it comes to possibly working with the [far right Alternative for Germany] AfD on certain points and making sure that it possibly also gets into certain offices with AfD votes.” In fact, in Thuringia the Left Party cooperates with the AfD and hoists the fascists into important offices. For example, the “left” prime minister Bodo Ramelow used his vote to make AfD man Michael Kaufmann vice-president of the Thuringia state parliament.

The open support for the extreme right in Thuringia was not a mistake. In the Left Party, there is an entire wing around former federal parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht that stirs up AfD-style nationalism, agitates against refugees and mobilises against the existing protective measures in the pandemic.

The new party leadership supports this course. Wagenknecht will “always play a prominent role in this party,” Hennig-Wellsow stressed. Wissler also affirmed that she wanted to “work well with all sections of the party.”

Sahra Wagenknecht is someone who “can convey the message of the Left Party and criticism of political opponents very pointedly. And of course, it would be very good if she played this role in the Bundestag [federal parliament] election campaign as well.”

In the face of the deepest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s and the growing radicalisation of the working class, all currents within the Left Party are closing ranks. In this, Wissler and Hennig-Wellsow personify the right-wing bourgeois character of the party and the sharp turn to the right of the entire trade union and pseudo-left milieu since the dissolution of the former East Germany (GDR) and the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy 30 years ago.

Hennig-Wellsow (born 1977) comes from a family of state bureaucrats who first made their career in the police apparatus of the GDR and later reunited Germany. According to Hennig-Wellsow’s official profile on the party website, her father first worked as a “forensics officer with the Volkspolizei (People’s Police)” and “after reunification ... with the Thuringian police.” Her mother was employed “from the mid-1990s [in] the Thuringia Interior Ministry.” She joined the PDS, the forerunner of the Left Party, as a student and has been a member of the Thuringia state parliament since 2004. She has played a key role in the right-wing Ramelow government as state and parliamentary party leader of the Left Party in Thuringia since 2014.

Wissler (born 1981) also comes from a Stalinist family. According to her statements, her mother was a member of the Stalinist German Communist Party (DKP) in the 1970s and later sympathised with the Greens. Her father was a trade unionist. Since Wissler comes from the Marx 21 group (the German satellite of the British Socialist Workers Party), she is regularly portrayed in the media as a “left-winger” or even a Marxist-Trotskyist counterpart to Hennig-Wellsow. This is absurd. As the party’s long-time state chairperson in Hesse and now also Left Party federal chairperson, she is a leading bourgeois politician who agrees with Hennig-Wellsow on all central issues. This also applies to foreign and defence policy.

If Wissler, unlike her Thuringia counterpart, publicly opposes foreign deployments of the Bundeswehr (armed forces), this has nothing to do with anti-militarism. She is merely afraid that too openly militarist rhetoric in the election campaign will undermine the Left Party’s ability to control the enormous opposition in the working class and youth against rearmament and war.

Marx 21 has long played a key role in the return of German militarism. Christine Buchholz, one of its leading representatives, has been sitting on the Bundestag defence committee for 12 years and is thus directly involved in war policy. Together with the defence minister, she has

repeatedly visited German troops in war zones. Marx 21 also plays a central role in the trumpeting of German imperialism in the Middle East and against Russia. The grouping supports the imperialist regime-change operation in Syria. In 2014, it praised the right-wing coup in Ukraine as a “democratic revolution” and it aggressively promotes a pro-Western “colour revolution” in Russia.

The pseudo-left’s turn to the right is not limited to the “state capitalists” of Marx 21. Thies Gleiss, a member of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), the German section of the Pabloite United Secretariat, is also a member of the new party executive.

Socialist Alternative (SAV), previously the German affiliate of Peter Taaffe’s Socialist Party, hailed the new party executive as altogether “more movement-oriented and potentially more left-wing.” Yet at the head of the party executive are figures such as former Berlin health senator (state minister) Katrin Lompscher and former finance policy spokesperson for the Left Party Axel Troost, who are notorious for their orgies of cuts (Lompscher) and public defence of the debt ceiling (Troost).

Mathias Höhn, the spokesperson on security policy, who had presented a war paper for rearmament and foreign military missions a few weeks before the party conference, did not make it to the party executive but received over 40 percent of the delegates’ votes. Tobias Pflüger, whom SAV describes as a “consistent anti-militarist,” was again elected in his place. In reality, Pflüger sits on the Bundestag defence committee together with Höhn and Buchholz and, like them, maintains close ties to the defence ministry and the army. On his website, he regularly documents his official visits to the German occupation forces in Afghanistan.



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