

German Left Party embraces the far-right AfD

Christoph Vandreier
16 April 2021

The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically intensified class tensions. While tens of thousands of people in Germany have lost their lives, hundreds of thousands are struggling with health problems, millions have suffered a loss of income and the top 10 percent of the population has perversely enriched itself. With its reopening policy, the ruling elite is sacrificing human lives to guarantee its profits.

Under these conditions, the class character of political tendencies is laid bare. In her new book *The Self-Righteous Ones*, Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht explicitly adopts the anti-immigrant and nationalist line of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and emerges as a vociferous proponent of a policy of mass infection. The fact that she was elected by 61 percent of delegates as the Left Party's lead election candidate in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia on Saturday underscores that her reactionary views are shared by the majority of the party.

Prior to the vote, Left Party parliamentary deputy Niema Morassat published extracts from Wagenknecht's book on Twitter. The book, which was officially released on Wednesday, is "a declaration of war against hundreds of thousands of people who vote for us and campaign to protect the environment and oppose racism," stated Morassat. The party's head of federal affairs, Jörg Schindler, also sought to distance himself from the book.

But Wagenknecht's persistent far-right agitation and her new tract do not contradict the Left Party's programme. If she agitates against refugees, embraces the AfD and unites with right-wing extremist coronavirus deniers, she does so from the standpoint of seeking to mobilise this far-right filth to impose that very programme.

As the party's parliamentary group leader for many years, Wagenknecht is one of the architects of the Left Party's anti-worker policies. Along with her entire parliamentary group, she voted for the emergency passage of the bank bailouts, which diverted hundreds of billions of euros in public money into the pockets of the super-rich. She is also a strident advocate for governments at the state level with Left Party participation that have cut wages, privatised hospitals and

housing, and built up the police.

These policies are the basis for Wagenknecht's agitation. In the tradition of the far right, she portrays herself as a spokesperson for the little guy and denounces self-righteous elites, while she in reality advances the ruling class' agenda by promoting nationalism, blaming immigrants for the attacks on wages and defending German capital against its foreign rivals.

Wagenknecht's criticisms of the Left Party and Greens' identity politics, which she enjoys focusing on in public discussions of her book, emerges from this right-wing standpoint. She does not criticise the fact that identity politics divides the workers and prevents them from mounting a common struggle against capitalism. Rather, she supports these divisions by advocating the exclusion of immigrants and discrimination against them in the job market. In this way, she diverts attention away from the Left Party's responsibility.

For example, the Left Party, in coalition with the Social Democrats, cut the wages of public sector workers in Berlin by up to 12 percent in order to finance guarantees for the Berlin Bankgesellschaft. Like a right-wing extremist, Wagenknecht declares foreigners to be responsible, and that wage cuts in many areas were "solely due to high levels of immigration to Germany." "The liberal-left narrative of cosmopolitanism and diversity caused them (the trade unions) to no longer dare to even raise the issue of the employment of immigrants," she claimed.

Wagenknecht does not merely adopt the slogan "Jobs for Germans first," but also explicitly defends politicians in the right-wing extremist AfD. The "accusations and allegations used to attack right-wing politicians in public debates" are "often excessive," she said. For example, the warning that AfD co-leader Jörg Meuthen wants to "introduce a new type of fascism in Germany" is totally unjustified.

Throughout the book, she presents in essence the far-right programme of the AfD, blusters about a German dominant culture, and appeals for a strong national state that will have to stand up to the United States and China.

Over recent months, Wagenknecht has used her YouTube show “Wochenschau” to reach out to the far-right “lateral thinker” demonstrators, coronavirus deniers and anti-vaccine advocates to ensure the abandonment of the last remaining restrictions aimed at containing the pandemic.

“I think it is criminal to encourage young and healthy people to take a vaccine, the long-term effects of which are totally unclear,” she said on December 10. The closure of retail outlets achieved nothing, but has “destroyed our economic basis,” she asserted on January 7. Then on February 4, she even rejected any evidence of a decline in incidence rates as a result of the closure of schools and workplaces; in March she declared the incidence rates to be exaggerated because PCR tests detect asymptomatic cases.

All these groundless claims are well known among coronavirus deniers and were disproved by scientists long ago. If one permitted Wagenknecht’s policy of allowing the mass infection of the population under age 65 to be pursued, up to 180,000 people in younger age groups would be at risk of losing their lives, according to calculations by the virologist Melanie Brinkmann. This death toll is apparently a price worth paying for Wagenknecht, “so that we don’t ruin our economy,” as she put it on the “Anne Will” talk show in February.

It comes as no surprise that Wagenknecht has won plaudits from the AfD for her racism, nationalism and strategy of mass infection. Daniel Reu, an AfD deputy in the Saxony-Anhalt state parliament, posted extracts from Wagenknecht’s book together with a picture of Wagenknecht and the AfD logo. The right-wing extremists’ North Rhine-Westphalia state party wrote on Twitter, “Sahra Wagenknecht hit the nail on the head.”

However, her decisive election as lead candidate makes clear that these right-wing positions are also supported by the Left Party. Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, all parties in parliament have imposed the inhumane policy of herd immunity, which puts corporate profits before human lives. As a result, social inequality has reached unprecedented levels, while close to 80,000 people have died from the virus. The parties are also stepping up the deportation of masses of immigrants and the strengthening of the repressive state apparatus.

On all of these issues, the Left Party plays a key role. The party’s only minister president, Bodo Ramelow in Thuringia, has been especially aggressive in enforcing the reopening of the economy. His state has the highest incidence rate of the pandemic in Germany, with 235 cases per 100,000 people over the past seven days. The coalitions made up of the SPD, Greens and Left Party in Berlin and Bremen also fully support the mass infection policy.

Thuringia has been for years one of the states with the

highest deportation rate per head of population. The state even deports people to war zones like Afghanistan. In every state where the Left Party is in government, refugees are being confined to inhuman camps despite the pandemic, threatening them with death on a daily basis. In Berlin, the SPD/Left Party/Green government adopted a new police law that paves the way for a police state.

On the basis of these right-wing policies, there have been numerous instances of the Left Party directly cooperating with the AfD. After the formation of a coalition government in Thuringia involving the Christian Democrats, AfD and Free Democrats provoked outrage across Germany and internationally, Ramelow ensured with his vote that the right-wing extremist party secured one of the state parliament’s vice president positions. At the local level, several alliances between the two parties have occurred.

To the extent that there is criticism within the Left Party of Wagenknecht’s positions, this is merely from the standpoint that she speaks too explicitly about what the party is implementing in practice on a daily basis. The Left Party is an integral part of the all-party coalition responsible for the imposition of social spending cuts, mass coronavirus infection and militarism. It is to achieve these ends that Wagenknecht is mobilising the right-wing extremist filth.

This underscores the urgency of building the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, which rejects the party cartel and is unifying workers in struggle against inequality, war and fascism. The SGP is standing in the federal election to fight for this socialist perspective.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)