

Leader of Germany's Left Party declares support for Sahra Wagenknecht

Peter Schwarz
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Sahra Wagenknecht possesses high popularity, can fill market squares and engages with the people via social media, Germany's Left Party leader Janine Wissler noted favorably on Sunday evening in ZDF television's summer interview.

"That is good, of course we have to use that for the party," she added. Wagenknecht advocates the Left Party's programme and says "many, many things that are absolutely necessary and correct," she stated.

Wagenknecht's latest book, *Die Selbstgerechten* ("The Self-Righteous"), which the *World Socialist Web Site* recently reviewed, shows exactly what positions she advocates. It is a Volkish-nationalist diatribe that takes up arms against cosmopolitanism and open-minded people, calls for economic protectionism and a strong state, and denounces immigrants and refugees as wage cutters, strikebreakers and foreign cultural elements. Thanks to the free advertising provided by all media outlets, the book has become a bestseller.

The fact that Wissler praises Wagenknecht in the strongest terms underscores the true character of the Left Party, which has nothing to do with left-wing politics or socialism other than its name.

Wissler, who together with Susanne Hennig-Wellsow was elected as the new Left Party leader in February and is the party's lead candidate for the federal election alongside Dietmar Bartsch, is often described in the media as a socialist and even a Trotskyist. In reality, she is nothing of the sort.

Her performance on Sunday evening alone underscored this fact. Asked by ZDF moderator Shakuntala Banerjee if she was a "communist," she squirmed like a worm. Wissler promptly responded that she is a "socialist," before going on to make clear that she understands this to mean merely a few of the mildest social reforms, like those supported in words by all other parties, "Nobody should go hungry."

Asked if she wanted to nationalize the banks—the interview was held on a rooftop terrace against the background of Frankfurt's bank towers—Wissler responded with an indirect but clear no. What is necessary is "stronger regulations."

Confronted with a video from 2011 in which she declared herself to be a supporter of the Egyptian revolution, she responded that even the German Foreign Minister at the time, Guido Westerwelle (Free Democrats, FDP), welcomed the uprising in Tahrir Square. Wissler's closing ranks with the Foreign Ministry perfectly sums up the role of the Left Party. In fact, she backed counterrevolutionary forces in Egypt, which directed the mass protests behind the military and in some cases continue to defend the regime's brutal repression to this day.

Wissler's routine token criticisms of German foreign military interventions by no means signify that she opposes such operations in principle. "Of course we discuss the specific operation," she responded to a follow-up question.

Wissler has been for over 20 years a member of the Marx21 group and its predecessor Linksruck, which specialized in defending the most right-wing policies by using pseudo-left rhetoric. They were members of the International Socialist Tendency. Its founder, Tony Cliff, broke with Trotskyism as early as the 1940s. He advanced the position that the Soviet Union was not a degenerated workers state but a "state capitalist" regime, and refused to defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack.

Since Linksruck's few dozen members decided in 2007 to dissolve their organisation into the Left Party, they have played a key role in justifying the party's right-wing policies. Three members, Christine Buchholz, Nicole Gohlke and Hubertus Sdebel, are in parliament. Buchholz has been a member of the parliamentary defense committee for over 12 years and regularly visits German

troops stationed abroad.

For her part, Wissler entered the Hesse state parliament in 2008, where she reached an agreement with the Social Democrats and Greens to tolerate a Social Democrat/Green minority government. The agreement ultimately failed due to the sabotage of an SPD deputy. Then in 2018, she sought once again to work out a government alliance with the Social Democrats and Greens. This is her declared goal for the federal election in September.

Marx21 supported the imperialist war in Syria, celebrated the coup in Ukraine in 2014 as a “democratic revolution,” and has since strongly advocated for the imposition of a pro-Western regime in Moscow.

The Left Party is in a deep crisis. While it finished ahead of the Greens in the 2017 federal election with 9.2 percent of the vote, it is struggling in current polls to achieve more than 7 or 8 percent. Even the party’s ability to pass the 5 percent hurdle for parliamentary representation is being questioned. In the state elections in Saxony-Anhalt in June, the Left Party lost more than half of its support. The Left Party’s right-wing record as a party of government in several states has ruined its reputation as a progressive alternative.

Under these conditions, Wissler was called to lead the party to give it a fresh coat of “left” paint, while the party continues to drift to the right. She has failed to succeed. The horrifying consequences of the coronavirus policy of the ruling class, which has claimed the lives of over 4 million people around the world and over 90,000 in Germany, attacks on wages and jobs, and the growing resistance by workers against this make it impossible to continue concealing the Left Party’s right-wing policies.

Anyone wishing to struggle against social inequality, war, and the far-right must support the federal election campaign of the Socialist Equality Party (SGP), which is the only party advocating a socialist program to mobilize the international working class.



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