

Left Party representatives demand expulsion of Sahra Wagenknecht for criticising German government war policy and NATO

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Leading representatives of the Left Party are calling for Sahra Wagenknecht's expulsion from the parliamentary group and the party because she criticised the economic sanctions against Russia in the Bundestag. The latest dispute within the Left Party shows how unconditionally it stands behind the war policy of the German government and NATO.

In the Bundestag (parliament) budget debate on September 8, Wagenknecht criticised the “grandiose idea” of the coalition government of the Social Democrats, Liberal Democrats and Greens to “unleash an unprecedented economic war against our most important energy supplier.”

The war in Ukraine was “a crime,” she added. “But the idea that we are punishing Putin by plunging millions of families in Germany into poverty and that we are destroying our industry while Gazprom is making record profits—yes, how stupid is that?”

If Germany wanted to “remain an industrial country,” it needed “Russian raw materials and, unfortunately, Russian energy for the foreseeable future,” Wagenknecht said. “Therefore, let's put an end to the fatal economic sanctions! Let's negotiate with Russia about a resumption of gas supplies!”

This was too much for many party representatives. As long as Wagenknecht was denouncing refugees and immigrants in the style of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), or invoking the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Nazi community of the people) in her nationalist diatribe “Die Selbstgerechten” (The Self-Righteous), that might still be acceptable. But criticism of the government's war policy—that goes too far!

The chief executive of the charity Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (Parity Welfare Association),

Ulrich Schneider, one of the best-known faces of the party, announced his resignation. “The fact that the Left Party parliamentary group let Wagenknecht take the podium last Thursday in the Bundestag, and what she then—one should have known—let loose, was too much,” he said, explaining his decision.

Former Member of the European Parliament and current Bundestag member Fabio de Masi, long a Wagenknecht supporter, also left the party. He “no longer [wanted] to be held responsible for the blatant failure of the key players in this party,” he said in justifying his resignation.

The two party leaders, Janine Wissler and Martin Schirdewan, publicly distanced themselves from Wagenknecht and accused her of countering resolutions and positions of the Left Party.

Thuringia state Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow wrote in a protest letter to the Bundestag parliamentary group that the thesis that “the Federal Republic of Germany is waging an economic war with Russia” distorted cause and effect. Demands for talks with Russia destroyed “our reputation as a left-wing, progressive political force in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.”

Three East German state parliamentarians—Henriette Quade, Katharina König-Preuss and Jule Nagel—launched an open letter to the party executive and the Left Party Bundestag parliamentary group. It demands Wagenknecht's expulsion from the Bundestag faction and the resignation of faction leaders Dietmar Bartsch and Amira Mohamed Ali for allowing her to speak in the Bundestag.

The letter now bears over 2,700 signatures, including those of several state and federal parliamentarians as well as numerous party members. A party split is in the

offing. If the parliamentary group were to break apart, it would lose its parliamentary group status. The Left Party is only represented in the Bundestag because it won three direct mandates; it fell below the 5 percent hurdle for its party slate. Whereas in 2009 it achieved its best election result with 11.9 percent, last year it was only 4.9 percent.

The fiction that the Left Party is in any way pursuing social or progressive policies has long since vanished into thin air. Wherever it has taken on government responsibility at state or local level, it has cut jobs, slashed social spending, armed the police and deported refugees. Now, it supports a war provoked by NATO, which is being systematically escalated and could lead to a third world war if not stopped by working class intervention.

The Left Party stands behind an economic war that is decimating the living standards of the working class in both Russia and Europe. Sanctions against Russia are the main cause of skyrocketing food and energy prices that are plunging millions into poverty, squeezing even better-off working families, and bankrupting the self-employed. Because Wagenknecht says this openly, she is being threatened with expulsion from the Left Party.

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Yet Wagenknecht represents only another form of the nationalist, pro-capitalist politics that characterise the Left Party as a whole. The graduate economist's role model is not Karl Marx, but Christian Democratic Union Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, who was chased out of office by the working class in 1966.

She does not speak for the international working class, which can only defend its interests in a united struggle against capitalism, but for those representatives of the German business community who regard the United States as their main rival and therefore rely on closer cooperation with Russia.

Notwithstanding her ritual invocation of the "fear for the future of millions of people" and her sideswipes at "skimmers and crisis profiteers," the interests of German big business were at the centre of Wagenknecht's speech in the Bundestag. She quoted finance daily *Handelsblatt*: "In key industries, businesses will close down by the dozen," and shouted, "If we don't stop the energy price explosion, then German industry with its strong middle class will soon

be just a memory of the good old days."

While Wagenknecht invoked the interests of "German industry with its strong middle class," she attacked US companies. She railed against "American fracking gas suppliers who are currently making €200 million profit on every single tanker" and were driving German families and medium-sized businesses to ruin with astronomical prices. She accused the German government of pursuing a policy of "Make America Great Again." With this—and many similar passages—she earned applause from the AfD, whose reactionary nationalism also has a strong anti-American thrust.

There is only one way to stop the NATO war against Russia and its devastating social consequences: An independent movement of the international working class, linking the struggle to defend living standards with the struggle against the war and its cause, capitalism.

But Wagenknecht—like her internal party opponents—vehemently rejects such an international, socialist perspective. She is at odds with the international class struggle and the industrial battles of American, British and European workers. Instead, she invokes nationalism and the interests of German big business, and thus earns support from the AfD.



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