

For international socialism, not nationalism and militarism

The socialist answer to the toxic peace petition of the Left Party's Sahra Wagenknecht

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Throughout Europe, opposition to NATO's war in Ukraine and its social consequences is growing. More and more people understand that for the US government and its European allies, it is not about democracy and peace but the military subjugation of Russia. They are willing to accept hundreds of thousands of deaths and the risk of nuclear war to achieve this.

At the same time, fierce class battles are developing, thwarting the war strategy of those in power. After years of the wealthy enriching themselves at their expense, workers are no longer willing to bear the cost of a war that can only lead to disaster. In France, millions have been protesting for weeks against President Macron's plans to cut pensions, Britain is experiencing the biggest wave of strikes in 40 years, and in Germany, millions are engaged in a fight over wages and conditions.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) placed the building of an international anti-war movement, combining the fight against war with a socialist programme for the working class, at the centre of its campaign for the recent Berlin House of Representatives (state assembly) election. In doing so, it has met with great approval and support in working class neighbourhoods.

It is in this context that the initiative of Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht and feminist Alice Schwarzer—who have launched a petition against the “escalation of arms deliveries” and “for peace negotiations” and are calling for a rally in Berlin on February 25—must be seen.

The petition has received nearly 600,000 signatures within 10 days on change.org. Many have signed because they want an immediate end to the war and take seriously the petition's warning of an unstoppable “slide toward world and nuclear war.” The media and the establishment parties have reacted to the petition with corresponding hostility.

But the petition's initiators are pursuing quite different objectives. They are abusing opposition to the war for a

nationalist and militarist agenda. They fear a mass movement of the working class as much as the government does. They speak for those representatives of the ruling class who believe that Germany should end its alliance with the US sooner rather than later and, as a “leading European power,” should pursue its geopolitical interests independently.

This is especially true of Wagenknecht, her husband Oskar Lafontaine and other prominent initial supporters of the petition, such as retired Brigadier General Erich Vad and right-winger Peter Gauweiler of Bavaria's Christian Social Union (CSU).

Lafontaine, a former leader of the Social Democratic Party and founder of the Left Party, with which he has since parted ways, never tires of accusing the German government of acting as vassals to the United States. “Among the most loyal vassals are the Europeans, above all Germany,” he writes in his latest book. “That is why we have the situation we are in now.” He calls for “the liberation of Europe from US military tutelage through an independent European security and defence policy” and “a joint defence alliance between Germany and France.”

This is not a “peace policy” but means massive rearmament and the pursuit of great power ambitions. An “independent European security and defence policy” would cost yet more hundreds of billions.

Erich Vad is also a convinced militarist. The retired brigadier general, a member of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), was responsible for special operations at US Central Command during the Bosnian War and provided military advice to Chancellor Angela Merkel. He is an admirer of the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt, who is the subject of a book he has written.

Since the petition was published, the right-wing orientation of its initiators has become increasingly apparent. Lafontaine and Wagenknecht are seeking to close ranks with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Wagenknecht, who

had initially distanced herself half-heartedly from right-wing extremist supporters and declared “everyone who honestly wants to demonstrate for peace and for negotiations” was welcome at the rally, going on to say that right-wing extremist flags or symbols would not be tolerated, later softened even this vague distancing.

Lafontaine called the claim that AfD politicians would not be welcome at the rally “utter nonsense.” This would make one “untrustworthy,” he said on the YouTube channel of Milena Peradovic, a stomping ground for coronavirus deniers and other right-wingers. Only “flags of, for instance, the Reichsbürger [Reich Citizens]” or “political propaganda for abstruse goals” were unwelcome, he said.

Former Left Party member of the Bundestag (federal parliament) Diether Dehm, a Wagenknecht supporter, even appeared on Saturday at a *Querdenker* (“lateral thinkers”) demonstration against the Munich security conference. The main speaker at the rally, which was also attended by numerous AfD members, was former CDU Bundestag member Jürgen Todenhöfer, who is also one of the first signatories of the Wagenknecht-Schwarzer petition.

The claim that an anti-war movement is only “credible” if it welcomes generals, right-wing bourgeois politicians and members of the fascist AfD into its ranks is absurd and reactionary. With people who trivialize Hitler’s war of extermination and the Holocaust as so much bird shit, along with fascists and militarists, one builds not an anti-war movement but a pro-war movement.

That is why the petition does not say a word about the revival of German militarism and the biggest rearmament offensive since the Third Reich. It condemns Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine, but not NATO’s criminal policy of waging a proxy war against Russia on the backs of the Ukrainian people.

The petition is not a call to fight war and nationalism, but an appeal to the chancellor to consistently protect “German” interests. It reads: “But we can and must hold our government and the chancellor to account and remind him of his oath: ‘To avert harm to the German people.’”

The “people” in Germany, as in all capitalist countries, are divided into irreconcilable and antagonistic social classes. Scholz defends—both at home and abroad—the social, economic and geopolitical interests of German capital, which is once again confronted with the same global contradictions it had sought to resolve through two world wars and the Nazi dictatorship.

A serious struggle against war must therefore also be directed against its root: capitalism. It must reject every form of nationalism and militarism and rely on the only social force that can prevent a catastrophe: the international working class, which is now on the move everywhere and

rising up against wage theft and war.

In accordance with Karl Liebknecht’s motto “The main enemy is at home,” it is necessary to denounce the warmongers in the chancellery, the defence and foreign ministries, who have been preparing the war for years with the expansion of NATO, the coup in Kiev in 2014 and the systematic armament of the Ukrainian army.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) stands for this perspective of international socialism as the German section of the Fourth International. Wagenknecht’s initiative is diametrically opposed to this and ultimately serves only to demoralize and suppress a mass movement of workers. That is why it collaborates with the worst opponents of the working class.

Those who really want to fight against war must join the campaign of the SGP and its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), to build a mass movement against the war in Ukraine. The call for this states:

We must turn out to the factories and workplaces, where workers are struggling against inequality and exploitation. They are the great power capable of overthrowing capitalism and forging a way forward for humanity. The IYSSE does not only seek the support of workers in the struggle against war. We recognize that the defeat of imperialism depends upon the emergence of the working class, armed with a socialist program, as the leading and decisive revolutionary force in the fight against the world capitalist system.



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