Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht's "Revolt for Peace": German nationalism instead of a fight against war

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The "Revolt for Peace" protest rally, which took place on Saturday in front of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, attracted around 13,000 participants, far fewer than had been expected. The "Manifesto for Peace," published in advance by the rally's organizers, prominent Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht and feminist Alice Schwarzer, had received nearly 700,000 signatures.

The manifesto had refrained from any criticism of the rapid rearmament of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) and was limited to an appeal to Chancellor Olaf Scholz to end the "escalation of arms deliveries" and to seek "peace negotiations." But hundreds of thousands had signed it because they oppose the German government's war course and take the danger of nuclear war seriously.

Since the manifesto was published two weeks ago, however, its right-wing character has become increasingly clear. "The initiators are abusing opposition to the war for a nationalist and militarist agenda," the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in an article. In the run-up to the demonstration, co-initiator Oskar Lafontaine had even explicitly welcomed politicians from the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) to the rally.

As a result, it was not the hundreds of thousands who reject the war and its constant escalation by NATO who came, but only those who could at least accept the nationalist orientation and the openness towards the right wing. Young people were almost completely absent, and the many older participants were recruited in part from right-wing *Querdenkern* (lateral thinkers), members of the Left Party and the remnants of the peace movement. Quite a few justified an alliance with the far-right AfD under the slogan "Unity of all opponents of war!"

Following Lafontaine's invitation, the AfD was also present at the rally. For example, leading AfD politicians Hans-Thomas Tillschneider, Jörg Urban and Gunnar Lindemann attended. They were joined by other right-wing extremists, such as Holocaust denier Nicolai Nerling and *Compact* editor-in-chief Jürgen Elsässer.

Wagenknecht's pro forma statement at the beginning of her contribution that "neo-Nazis and *Reichsbürger* would of course have no business at our peace rally" was therefore pure charade. She also took pains in the very next sentence to assure that "everyone who honestly wants to demonstrate for peace and negotiations" would also be "welcome" at future rallies—the same formulation with which Lafontaine had explicitly invited AfD politicians.

The nationalist and militarist orientation of the demonstration was most clearly summed up in the speech of its co-initiator, former Brigadier General Erich Vad. An advocate of massive rearmament, Vad publishes articles in far-right newspapers and promotes a more aggressive conduct by Germany and Europe in the world arena.

In his speech, he declared, "Military operations and arms deliveries must always remain linked to attempts to bring about political solutions." However, he said, a "long continuation of the Ukraine war" was "neither in Germany's nor in Europe's interest." The German government, he said, must "claim a say" in Ukraine and, together with the French government, should "finally take action" so that "Germany and Europe are no longer objects and pawns in a proxy war." To

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thunderous applause, Vad concluded, “Europe must finally become an interest-driven strategic actor!”

Wagenknecht also called for an independent European foreign policy. While she did call for a cease-fire, urged negotiations with Russia and warned of a “nuclear inferno,” she held the interests of the “White House” and the “American sphere of influence” solely responsible for the outbreak of the Ukraine war. She accused the German government of allowing “Germany to be drawn more and more into this war—until the war possibly arrived here.” Wagenknecht criticized Germany’s largest rearmament drive since the fall of the Nazi regime and the government’s aggressive policy of escalation primarily from the standpoint that the federal government was allowing itself to be pressured into it by the United States.

General appeals for peace—combined with accusations that the German government had no “objectives” and was a vassal of the US government—were also the basic hallmarks of the other speeches. Speakers included neoliberal US economist and economic adviser Jeffrey Sachs (via video), actress Corinna Kirchhoff and peace activist Hans-Peter Waldrich. Feminist Alice Schwarzer, who spoke after Wagenknecht, claimed that the cause of the Ukraine war and the threat of nuclear war was not capitalism but a general “masculinity.”

At the end of the rally, Lafontaine, Wagenknecht, Schwarzer and Vad, as well as Left Party politician Sevim Dagdelen, stood hand in hand on the stage.

The whole rally was not a call to fight against war, but an appeal to the government to look after German interests more consistently. As a result, the militarists and nationalists of the AfD were also welcome.

In the leaflet supporters distributed at the rally, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) declared:

> 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.
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> 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 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.

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