

Germany's Left Party parliamentary chair resigns

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The resignation of Amira Mohamed Ali as co-chair of the Left Party's faction in the Bundestag (federal parliament) brings a possible split and the formation of a new party under the leadership of Sahra Wagenknecht much closer. Mohamed Ali is part of the Left Party's leadership, which consists of two party and two parliamentary group leaders.

At the beginning of last week, Mohamed Ali announced she would not run again in the election of the new parliamentary party co-chairs on September 4. The reason she gave was irreconcilable political differences. It had become "impossible for her ... to support and represent the line of the party, above all the party leadership, in public." The unanimous call by the party executive on June 10 for Sahra Wagenknecht to resign her parliamentary mandate, saying that she no longer had a future in the Left Party, was the final straw, she said.

The conflict between Wagenknecht and the party leadership has been simmering for a long time. For months, there has been talk of founding a new party. However, Wagenknecht has not yet committed herself. One reason is likely to be that if three or more MPs leave the party, the Left Party faction loses its parliamentary group status, resulting in the loss of large financial contributions and up to 70 staff.

However, Wagenknecht wants to decide by the end of the year at the latest. The new party would then be able to participate in the 2024 European elections and state elections in the eastern German states of Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg, where Wagenknecht has high approval ratings. Mohamed Ali's open attack on the party leadership is a signal that a split will soon occur.

Two right wings

The dispute between the party executive and the Wagenknecht camp is a struggle between two wings that are responding to mounting class tensions by rapidly moving to the right.

On the one hand, the party executive is based on politicians who bear government responsibility at state and local levels and—like the Thuringia state Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow—are no different from corresponding Social Democrat (SPD), Green or Christian Democrat (CDU) politicians. They organise social cuts, beef up the police, deport refugees, support the federal government's pro-war policy and promote arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Another pillar of the party executive are pseudo-left politicians who—like the two party leaders Janine Wissler and Martin

Schirdewan—focus on gender and identity politics and court the well-heeled clientele of the Greens. They also support the German government's pro-war course and arms deliveries to Ukraine.

As a result of these right-wing, anti-working class policies, voters and Left Party members are running away in droves. Having received just under 12 percent of the vote in the 2009 Bundestag elections, it failed to clear the 5 percent hurdle in 2021 and only returned to the Bundestag thanks to winning three direct mandates. In the meantime, it has only achieved 4 percent in the polls. In its eastern-German strongholds, where the Left Party was at times the strongest party, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) now occupies the top spot. The Left Party is now only in fourth or fifth place.

Party membership fell from 78,000 to 54,000 between 2009 and 2022, and is now likely to be even lower. According to Andreas Grünwald, a Left Party official in Hamburg, 10,000 members have left since the 2021 Bundestag elections.

The Wagenknecht wing is reacting to this bloodletting by adopting the policies of the AfD more and more openly.

Wagenknecht, who holds a doctorate in economics, was spokesperson for the Stalinist Communist Platform in the Left Party's predecessor, the PDS, in the 1990s. She disposed of the works of Karl Marx two decades ago and replaced them with the writings of the ordoliberal economists of the post-war Adenauer era. The terms "socialism" and "communism" no longer appear in their vocabulary.

Wagenknecht infuses her capitalist economic ideology with a large dose of nationalist poison. In 2021, she published "The Self-Righteous," a völkisch-nationalist tirade against cosmopolitanism and cultural openness, for protectionism and a strong state. In it, she denounces immigrants and refugees as depressing wages, strike-breakers and elements alien to the culture.

Wagenknecht tries to present herself as the advocate of the little people against the wealthy urban middle classes, against "left liberals" and "lifestyle leftists." In her resignation letter, Mohamed Ali also accuses the party executive of not formulating "a fundamental no to the wrong course of the [federal] coalition [government] ... which does nothing against child poverty, against wages that are not enough to live on, against poverty pensions." But this is hollow social demagoguery.

Wagenknecht and her supporters have always gone along with and supported the anti-working class policies of the Left Party. When Mohamed Ali first took on a public function for the party, it had been involved in state governments for 17 years and pursued a strict austerity course. In Berlin, the SPD-Left Party Senate (state executive) had even left the municipal employers' association in order to be able to significantly reduce public sector salaries and lay off tens of

thousands.

After her election as parliamentary party leader four years ago, Mohamed Ali herself had declared that she could imagine a coalition with the SPD and the Greens in the federal government. “It is about bringing about tangible improvements in the lives of the vast majority of the population. If that is possible with the SPD and the Greens, I am of course in favour,” she told the *Freie Presse* at the time.

Wagenknecht and Mohamed Ali also do not fundamentally reject the massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) and NATO’s aggressive war course against Russia, another disagreement with the party leadership.

Wagenknecht’s criticism of the Ukraine war is not directed against German militarism, but against its dependence on the USA. If Germany rearms for its own interests, she is for it.

In his latest book, her mentor and husband Oskar Lafontaine calls for “the liberation of Europe from the military tutelage of the USA through an independent European security and defence policy” and “a joint defence alliance between Germany and France.” At the Berlin “peace demonstration” of February 25, 2023, which Wagenknecht organised together with the feminist Alice Schwarzer, the main speaker was retired Brigadier General Erich Vad, an ardent militarist.

After her resignation, Mohamed Ali justified her rejection of economic sanctions against Russia on Deutschlandfunk radio by saying that they primarily harmed Germany. “If it were the case that these energy sanctions had led to Russia having difficulties in continuing this war, I would have a different position there.”

The Wagenknecht camp is alarmed that the Left Party is no longer able to buffer the growing social opposition and serve as a fig leaf and lightning rod for the federal and state governments. It is therefore trying to channel the discontent into a dead end with a mixture of social demagoguery and reactionary nationalism.

Wagenknecht and AfD

Wagenknecht’s new party project enjoys great support among the ruling class. She is regularly invited onto the most important talk shows. Her books are hyped as bestsellers, making her one of the best-earning members of the Bundestag; since the Bundestag elections two years ago, she has reported a side income of almost €800,000. Major media outlets such as *Der Spiegel* and *The Pioneer* regularly devote extensive cover stories to her.

This propaganda reaches the peak of cynicism when Wagenknecht’s right-wing project is portrayed as an attempt to pull the rug from under the AfD. In an editorial on August 9, *Der Spiegel* explicitly called on Wagenknecht to finally found a new party: “Do it, Ms Wagenknecht!” In justification, it said: “For the Left Party, a split under Wagenknecht’s leadership would be a serious setback. For democracy, it could be good news.”

“With Wagenknecht’s new party, a ‘Left Alternative’ could grow up in the East to collect the disenchanting and disengaged,” author Severin Weiland continues. “Some who are currently considering voting for the AfD with a guilty conscience would possibly vote with a clear conscience for a left-wing package with partly similar content. ... A weakening of the AfD, especially in the East, would be a gain for the democratic stability of the Republic.”

The conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* expresses a

similar opinion. Under the headline “Possible Wagenknecht party: danger also for the AfD,” it says: “A Wagenknecht party would not only poach [voters] in East German left-wing strongholds, but also from the voter reservoir of the AfD, which is largely right-wing extremist. Programmatically, populist Wagenknecht offers an attractive mix of classic left-wing social policy and a restrictive national course on the immigration and refugee issues for ideologically unaffiliated protest and non-voters.”

Mohamed Ali also argues in this direction when she accuses the party leadership of “increasingly driving the Left Party into political irrelevance” because it fails to “reach the people for whom a left-wing party should above all make policy.” This included AfD voters “who can still be won back.”

In reality, a Wagenknecht party that combines right-wing and nationalist positions with social demagoguery would strengthen the most reactionary forces. It would even be able to ally itself with the AfD. Syriza, the Greek sister party of the Left Party, has already demonstrated this when, after its election victory eight years ago, it formed a coalition with the far-right “Independent Greeks” and realised the dictates of the international banks.

This is the reason why many media outlets hail Wagenknecht’s project. In the face of increasing international class struggles—the pension protests in France, the strike wave in the USA, the collective bargaining disputes at Deutsche Bahn, etc.—the ruling class rely on fascist forces to intimidate and suppress resistance.

That is why they are rolling out the red carpet for the fascist Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Berlin, Brussels and Washington. In Germany, they court AfD representatives and elect them to high parliamentary offices. The only reason the establishment parties (still) shy away from accepting them into government is because they fear a public outcry. The diversions via a Wagenknecht party should remedy this.

There is only one way to fight the AfD and the fascist danger. The building of an international, socialist movement of the working class that combines resistance to social cuts, layoffs and social inequality with the struggle against war, fascism and their cause, capitalism. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the International Committee of the Fourth International stand for.



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