

The Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance adopts a right-wing manifesto for the European elections

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The political contours of Sarah Wagenknecht's new party are becoming increasingly clear. Following the party's official foundation on January 8, the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) held its first national conference on January 27 and presented a 20-page manifesto for the European elections.

The conference took place against the backdrop of the deepest international crisis in capitalist society since the end of the Second World War. The German government is preparing for a third imperialist world war and is arming to a degree not seen since Hitler. It is waging war against Russia, supporting the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza and helping the US to ignite a conflagration in the Middle East and prepare for a nuclear confrontation with China.

The new party aims to contain the growing opposition to this insane pro-war policy and to suppress the class struggle that stands in the way of the ruling class' war plans. It spouts some pacifist phrases and blathers on about "social justice," but its real programme is militaristic and anti-working class.

The party is aimed at the so-called "hard-working middle class," trade union officials and members of the state security apparatus. In her conference speech, Wagenknecht spoke about the different social milieus from which the 450 delegates came, all carefully selected by the party leadership to avoid controversy. The first people she mentioned were "trade unionists, works council representatives and successful entrepreneurs, nurses and police officers." Pay attention to the order!

For years, trade union officials and works council reps have served as well-paid company policemen, relied upon by the corporations to smoothly implement wage cuts and redundancies. Police officers embody the armed force of the state apparatus, which is used to suppress social resistance.

The mention of nurses, on the other hand, merely serves as a fig leaf. Wagenknecht's party strictly opposes coronavirus protection measures, whose absence has meant workers and

nurses in particular have had to suffer. The BSW even retrospectively denounces the government's completely inadequate measures in the initial phase of the pandemic as "political authoritarianism."

The BSW's European election manifesto is a right-wing, pro-capitalist programme. There is nothing in it that could not be found in the same or a similar form in the programmes of the Christian Democrats (CDU), Social Democrats (SPD), Liberal Democrats (FDP), Greens or even the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Insofar as it criticises the European Union, it does so not from the left, from the standpoint of the common interests of the European working class, but from the right, from the standpoint of the national interests of the corporations and banks.

The BSW wants to maintain the EU in order to defend European imperialism against its international rivals, including the US. "We want to contribute to the European Union's return to its political, economic and security autonomy," the programme states. "Europe must become an independent player on the world stage instead of being a pawn in the conflict between the major powers and subordinating itself to the interests of the USA."

It goes without saying that such "security policy independence" for Europe requires a strong army in a world that is increasingly characterised by war and trade wars. The programme explicitly warns that Europe "will become the loser due to its geographical location and its dependence on raw materials, energy sources and export markets." The commitment to a "peaceful Europe in a multipolar world" and phrases about disarmament, détente, peaceful conflict resolution and diplomacy, which can also be found in the programme, are merely decorative accessories.

It is significant that there is no mention of NATO at all, let alone a call for the dissolution of the world's most aggressive military alliance. The programme also expressly upholds the common European foreign and defence policy (CFSP and CSDP). It merely demands that the principle of

unanimity for international European military missions and they be subject to German parliamentary approval.

Within the EU, the Wagenknecht party wants to strengthen the nation states. It is in favour of the EU single market, but wants to restrict the free movement of workers—i.e., the right of workers to work in the country of their choosing—which it holds responsible for poor wages, precarious employment and poverty. Instead of uniting European workers in the fight against cuts in wages and social spending, the Wagenknecht party is trying to divide them by blaming competition from their European fellow workers—and not the profit motive of the corporations—for falling living standards.

The BSW's stance on refugees and immigrants most clearly shows the reactionary core of its politics. It is no different from the posture of the AfD and other fascist parties. The election manifesto states that “a completely misguided immigration policy” has created “Islamist-influenced parallel societies in which law and order only apply to a limited extent, Sharia law is preached, and children grow up hating Western culture.” It calls for “a fundamental reform of refugee and immigration policy” and is in favour of “asylum procedures at external borders and in third countries.”

The BSW's economic programme focuses on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which it describes as the “engine of the European and especially the German economy” and for which it calls for subsidies and protective customs measures. It rails against “Anglo-Saxon-influenced Blackrock capitalism,” which has replaced the “once strong European welfare states,” but does so exclusively from the perspective of small capital, which feels crushed by big capital.

There are no serious measures against the power of hedge funds and banks in the programme, let alone calls for their expropriation. Even taxes on corporate profits and wealth are only minimally increased in the BSW programme. For example, the programme complains that “corporate tax rates have fallen by more than half since the 1980s to their current level of 24 percent,” only to demand “a minimum tax rate on corporate profits of 25 percent” three paragraphs later—i.e., 1 percent more.

The BSW's European election programme is so right-wing and repulsive that the party conference directors invited the now 80-year-old ex-Social Democrat Oskar Lafontaine to deliver the closing speech. Lafontaine went to great lengths; railing against rearmament, the war against Russia, social injustice and the policies of the German government.

He tried to persuade his audience that Germany could be transformed into a prosperous capitalist paradise if only “common sense” were to prevail in politics. If the

government politicians had not “lost their minds,” if they had not gone “insane,” if the “stupidest government in history” had not led the country into the abyss, everything would be in perfect order, he claimed.

One waits in vain for Lafontaine to explain the causes of the social crisis. He rejects the idea that it has anything to do with the capitalist social system, which is bankrupt not only in Germany but worldwide. Like a used car dealer who sells his customers a run-down beater as a flawless top model, he endlessly recycles old political recipes that have long since failed: All you had to do was return to the economic policy of Ludwig Erhard (CDU) and the foreign policy of Willy Brandt (SPD)—and Germany would become an island of bliss, is his message.

Lafontaine is an expert at selling the most right-wing policies with left-wing phrases. Before founding the Left Party together with Gregor Gysi in 2007—as the eventual successor to the Stalinist party of state in the former East Germany—he held top party and government positions in the SPD for 40 years. As mayor of Saarbrücken, he introduced forced labour for welfare recipients, as minister president of Saarland he quietly wound up the coal mining and steel industries, as SPD national chairman he helped Gerhard Schröder become chancellor, and go on to take post-war Germany's armed forces into their first foreign combat missions, while imposing welfare cuts at home. With the Left Party, he continued the policy of social cuts under a pseudo-left guise—with disastrous social consequences.

Now, Lafontaine, who married Sahra Wagenknecht in 2014, is founding his third party. But this time his hoax will not succeed. The lies and illusions he is spreading are bursting faster than soap bubbles.

Anyone who wants to confront the threat of war and militarism and stop social decline must fight for the overthrow of capitalism. And there is only one way to do this: The mobilisation and unification of the international working class on the basis of a socialist programme. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) stands for. It is contesting the European elections in order to win workers and young people throughout Europe for this perspective together with its sister parties in the Fourth International. It is fighting for a United Socialist States of Europe.



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