

What is behind the “Heidi hype”?—the Left Party lead candidate in Germany’s federal election

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In the run-up to the German federal election, articles promoting the Left Party and attempting to present its lead candidate Heidi Reichinnek as a new left-wing figurehead are multiplying in the bourgeois media. She has “become somewhat famous,” is “the internet celebrity of her party,” a “left-wing influencer” and “now something of a star,” writes *Der Spiegel* in an article on the “hype surrounding Heidi.”

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* introduces a recent interview with Reichinnek with the words: “There are female politicians who have voters. Heidi Reichinnek has fans.” And even the traditionally right-wing press is publishing veritable promotional articles about “Heidi” and the Left Party’s election campaign. “Heidi and Jan [van Aken—the Left Party leader and second lead candidate in the federal election campaign] against ‘those at the top’” was the headline of an article in Monday’s conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Prior to that, a report already appeared in this mouthpiece of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange under the headline: “Party on the up: On Tiktok, the Left Party has left [Christian Democratic Union leader Friedrich] Merz behind.”

The reason for the propaganda offensive is not difficult to understand. The ruling class is nervous in response to the mass protests against the open collaboration of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) and Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) with the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the right-wing and anti-refugee policies of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens. It fears that opposition to fascism and war and the constant attacks on democratic and social rights will continue to grow and take on independent forms.

To prevent this, those in power need the Left Party. A party whose predecessor, the SED/PDS, was the former Stalinist state party in the German Democratic Republic [East Germany] and is associated with the suppression of the working class and the subsequent reintroduction of capitalism. And a party that, because of this history and its right-wing, pro-capitalist policies, has generally been hated by workers and young people ever since.

In the last federal election in 2021, the Left Party lost more than two million voters. It received only 4.9 percent of the popular vote, down 4.3 percent from 2017. Contrary to what the media has suggested, the Left Party is not currently gaining any new mass support, but is instead polling at only 5 or 6 percent in the latest polls, barely above its level four years ago.

The fact that some of Reichinnek’s videos and speeches are going viral on social media is undoubtedly linked to the growing opposition

to the fascist threat, especially among young voters. But those who seriously want to fight the right-wing menace will find no viable perspective in Reichinnek, only moral outrage coupled with a few radical-sounding phrases.

Politically, Reichinnek’s vociferous calls (“We will all take to the streets” or “To the barricades!”) conceal an orientation towards the very parties that are responsible for the rise of the fascists.

In her much-cited speech in the Bundestag (federal parliament) on January 31, she said, in the direction of CDU chancellor candidate Merz: “Despite all political differences, I could never have imagined that a Christian Democratic party—a Christian Democratic party!—would break ranks and make pacts with the far right.” She accused Merz of having “purposefully sought these majorities,” adding, “That is the damn problem, and you still don’t understand it.”

Historical ignorance is coupled here with political stupidity. And both are aimed at blocking a real understanding of the situation and the building of an independent mass movement against fascism. Precisely in consideration of German history, it is not only conceivable but an unmistakable fact that a “Christian Democratic party is making pacts with the far right.”

A brief look at history shows this. Like all other bourgeois parties, the Christian Democratic *Centre Party*, from which many post-war CDU leaders, including the first German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, were recruited, voted in favour of Hitler’s Enabling Act on March 24, 1933. Many old Nazis, including Adenauer’s head of the chancellery, Hans Globke, found their new political home in the CDU after the fall of the Third Reich. Conversely, many of today’s AfD leaders, including its honorary chairman Alexander Gauland, come from the CDU.

Appeals to Merz to “understand the problem” and to reconsider his orientation towards the AfD are politically criminal in this context. The CDU leader is not acting out of a lack of understanding—indeed, his “targeted” cooperation with the AfD has objective causes and is not limited to the CDU. Similar to the ruling class in the US relying on Trump, the German elites are once again relying on fascist forces, as in the 1930s, to push through their programme of rearmament, social cuts and dictatorship against the population. In its statement for the federal elections, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) asserts:

Donald Trump, a convicted felon, real estate mogul and casino operator, pursues a policy of economic extortion,

military conquest and violent repression. He not only threatens China and other economic rivals with punitive tariffs and military force but also targets America's traditional allies. By arresting and deporting millions of migrants, he is laying the groundwork to suppress all social and political opposition within the United States and establish a dictatorship.

The German ruling class is following a similar path. Its answer to "Make America Great Again" is "Deutschland über alles" (Germany above all), responding to Trump by rearming at a pace not seen since Hitler. All parties represented in the Bundestag (federal parliament) are united on this. In the war against Russia, they are willing to risk a nuclear conflagration. In Gaza, they are supporting genocide. The federal election was brought forward to install a government capable of implementing the policies of war and the accompanying social cuts more effectively than the discredited coalition government led by the Social Democrats (SPD).

In reality, Reichinsek's appeal to the SPD and the Greens in the Bundestag—"Rule out a coalition with this Union [CDU/CSU]. It can only harm you"—is not directed against the fascist danger, but at suppressing an independent socialist movement of the working class against capitalism, fascism and war. The SPD and the Greens are not only willing to form a coalition with Merz and the CDU. They are attacking him in the election campaign for not already implementing the right-wing extremists' refugee policy together with them.

In fact, the Left Party itself is part of this right-wing, all-party coalition. This is most evident wherever it governs (or has governed) at state level together with the SPD and the Greens, aggressively implementing the anti-refugee and anti-working class programme with the parties of social cuts and war. Above all, Thuringia—where the Left Party provided its first and so far only state premier, Bodo Ramelow, between 2014 and 2024—is notorious for high deportation rates, poverty and the strengthening of the far-right AfD by all the establishment parties.

Ramelow, part of the "Silver Locks Mission," is standing as a constituency candidate in the election. He regularly appears with Reichinnek and describes himself as a "Heidi fan." In 2020, he cast his own vote to make the AfD man Michael Kaufmann vice president of the Thuringia state parliament. And in the various parliamentary committees of the state parliament and at the municipal level, Left Party representatives have long been working closely with the AfD themselves. In Saxony, the Left Party is also supporting the integration of the AfD by regularly consulting with them in the work of the minority CDU/SPD coalition state government.

Reichinnek's opposition to the fascists is just as impotent and dishonest as her phrases about "social justice," "human rights" and "peace." In fact, she, like the rest of her party, supports the government's warmongering policies, which are at the expense of the social and democratic rights of workers, and which are linking ever more openly to the predatory and genocidal traditions of German imperialism.

In a speech in the Bundestag on March 21, 2024, Reichinnek was particularly aggressive in her support for the genocide in Gaza. She repeated the official atrocity propaganda about the alleged "brutal massacre by Hamas," whose "brutal violence against children and sexualised violence against women" could only be "compared to a few events." Hamas "are not freedom fighters, but terrorists who must

be disarmed. We must all agree on this here." Israel "of course has the right to defend itself."

For this open support of the Israeli war of extermination against the Palestinians, which has already cost tens of thousands of human lives and is now being driven to extremes by Trump and the right-wing extremist Netanyahu regime, Reichinnek received applause not only from her own ranks, but also from deputies from the SPD, the Greens and the FDP, according to the Bundestag minutes.

And Reichinnek also stands firm on the second imperialist war front in Ukraine against Russia. On *Abgeordnetenwatch.de*, when asked about "support for Ukraine before, during and after negotiations," she made it clear that she fully supports NATO's war aim of putting Russia in its place in Ukraine. Any negotiations should "of course not be determined by China and Russia's interests," she emphasised.

With regard to sanctions policy, she even attacks the German government from the right, which is arming the Ukrainian army to the teeth, an army riddled with right-wing extremist forces. The Left Party had "long been calling for increased pressure on Russian oligarchs in order to strengthen the interest in a quick end to the war in Putin's power apparatus as well." To this end, she suggested, "for example, a real estate register and the freezing and confiscation of property in Germany." The federal government was doing "far too little" here.

Cynically, Reichinnek sports a tattoo of Rosa Luxemburg on her forearm. There is no question that the great revolutionary Marxist would have fiercely opposed "Heidi's" pseudo-left and thoroughly bourgeois and pro-imperialist policies. As Luxemburg emphasised on the eve of the First World War, the working class must

draw the conclusion that imperialism, war, the plundering of countries, the trading of nations, the breaking of laws, the politics of force can only be fought by fighting capitalism, by opposing world political genocide with social revolution.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) stands in this Marxist tradition, which was continued after the Russian October Revolution by Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition to Stalinism and later the Fourth International. Workers and young people who want to fight fascism, social cuts and war must consciously place themselves in this tradition and build up the SGP as a new mass socialist party. The situation is serious and demands serious revolutionary policies. The political superficiality of the pseudo-left and their supporters in the bourgeois press must be exposed and rejected for what they are: reactionary manoeuvres to save capitalism.



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