

After the AfD's election victory: The Left Party is courting the CDU

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The AfD's election victory in Saxony-Anhalt has triggered the expected reaction from the Left Party. Following the rise of the extreme right, it is not breaking with the policies that paved the way for it. On the contrary, it is ingratiating itself even more openly with the CDU and the other establishment parties and offering to prop up CDU-led governments. This recipe will not weaken the AfD but strengthen it further.

The AfD is not an accident. Its rise is taking place within the framework of a rightward shift that has been driven from above for years. Under conditions of a deep crisis of capitalism, the ruling class is turning ever more openly to militarism, domestic rearmament and social cuts, and for this purpose it is strengthening authoritarian and far-right forces. A significant part of the AfD leadership comes from the state apparatus and the establishment parties. Its lead candidate in Saxony-Anhalt, Ulrich Siegmund, was also a member of the CDU for five years before joining the AfD.

The Left Party knows very well that the AfD's rise is a product of these policies. It itself accuses the federal government of preparing the ground for the AfD through rearmament, social cuts and the adoption of right-wing positions. Nevertheless, it declares the CDU, of all parties, to be its partner in the supposed "fight against the right."

After the election, Left Party chair Ines Schwerdtner described the result as a "reckoning with the federal government" and blamed the CDU and SPD as well. But her criticism of the Union culminated in the accusation that, until shortly before the election, it had declared "that one did not have to talk to other parties." The Left Party, she said, would continue trying to keep the AfD "away from power." Co-chair Luigi Pantisano assured: "We will help prevent the AfD from appointing the minister president."

Leading Left Party politicians had already made clear before the election what this means. In the ZDF summer interview, Pantisano explicitly did not rule out voting for CDU lead candidate Sven Schulze as minister president. The Left Party had shown, he said, that it takes "responsibility for this country," "especially when it comes to preventing the AfD from coming to power." Before that, he had even apologized to the CDU for comparing its policies with those of the AfD and describing them as fascist, and counted the Union as part of the "democratic spectrum."

Bodo Ramelow was even more explicit. The CDU had to stop "dithering" and work together with the Left Party. The AfD's program, declared the former Thuringian minister president, had to "bring all democrats together." Eva von Angern, the Left Party's lead candidate in Saxony-Anhalt, declared in turn that Schulze would have to talk "either with the AfD or with the Left Party."

This says everything about the class character of the Left Party. It is not a socialist alternative to the prevailing policy but a pillar of the existing capitalist order. Its function consists above all in binding opposition to war, social cuts and the rightward shift to the establishment parties and preventing the development of an independent socialist movement of the working class.

The Left Party itself bears central responsibility for the rise of the extreme right that it claims to oppose. First, it helped create the social catastrophe that the AfD exploits, especially in eastern Germany. Second, through right-wing government policies under a left label, it discredited the idea of a socialist alternative. And third, it supports central parts of the program of the ruling class—from social cuts and rearmament to refugee policy—and is itself prepared to make pacts with extreme-right forces.

Anyone who wants to fight the AfD must therefore understand how things could come to this, especially in Germany—and what key role the Left Party played in it.

Social devastation of East Germany

The decisive starting point was the restoration of capitalism in 1989–90—the reintroduction of capitalist property relations in East Germany. Reunification was officially celebrated as the triumph of "freedom" and "democracy." For millions of workers in the East, however, it meant the destruction of entire industries, mass unemployment, the destruction of social gains and the devastation of whole regions.

This process was not carried out against the Stalinist bureaucracy of East Germany but with its active support. The SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) bureaucracy suppressed every independent movement of the working class against capitalist restoration in 1989. Its successor party, the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism), helped organize German unification on a capitalist basis and subsequently assumed policing functions in the new state.

The social catastrophe that the AfD exploits today therefore did not fall from the sky. Over decades, the PDS and later the Left Party played a key role in securing the consequences of capitalist restoration and tying social opposition to the SPD, the trade unions and the state apparatus.

Where it governed, the Left Party directly implemented the attacks. In Berlin, the SPD-PDS coalition government between 2002 and 2011 massively cut public sector incomes, eliminated jobs and privatized public housing on a large scale. In Thuringia, Ramelow boasted even before taking office that he was more investor-friendly than the CDU.

The political impact is far-reaching. When a party that calls itself "left" and promises social justice implements the same capitalist policies in government as the SPD, Greens and CDU, it not only creates the social breeding ground for the fascists. It also discredits the idea of a left-wing alternative and enables the AfD to demagogically posture as an opponent of the entire political establishment.

Social counterrevolution to militarism

The rightward development of the Left Party is not limited to the policy of social counterrevolution. It also played a central role in the return of German militarism, which ultimately requires dictatorial methods and a fascist party like the AfD.

As early as 2013, its then foreign policy spokesman Stefan Liebich collaborated on the strategy paper “New Power—New Responsibility.” It programmatically prepared the turn announced by President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen at the Munich Security Conference in early 2014: Germany had to end its supposed “culture of military restraint” and once again play a role internationally corresponding to its economic power.

Since then, the Left Party has integrated itself ever more deeply into this offensive. It supported the Western-backed overthrow in Ukraine in 2014 and, after the Russian invasion in 2022, closed ranks with the federal government and NATO on fundamental issues. Leading politicians called for sanctions against Russia, “security guarantees” for Ukraine and a stronger European great-power policy.

The party also lined up behind German *Staatsräson* during the Gaza genocide. After the beginning of Israel’s war of extermination, its then Bundestag deputies voted in October 2023 for a joint resolution by the coalition government and the Union in support of Israel.

In March 2025, a further qualitative step followed. The states of Bremen and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, co-governed by the Left Party, voted in the Bundesrat for the constitutional amendment that laid the foundation for the largest rearmament since the Second World War. Their votes were not even necessary. Parliamentary group leader Heidi Reichinnek declared at the same time that the claim that the Left Party did not want to support the Bundeswehr was a “straw man.” Rather, one had to discuss “calmly” what it needed and finance the corresponding requirements.

Only a few weeks later, the party stepped in again when Friedrich Merz failed in the first round of voting for chancellor. The Left Party enabled a second ballot on the same day. Ramelow declared that this had been done “to protect democracy.” Afterwards, Schwerdtner even called on the Union not to contact the Left Party in future only “when the house is on fire.”

During the US-Israeli attack on Iran, then Left Party chairman Jan van Aken went even further. Although he described the attack as illegal under international law, he declared that he was “glad” that Khamenei and other members of the Iranian leadership had been killed; they could “rot in hell.”

Nothing remains of the party’s supposedly anti-militarist positions except a few phrases in Sunday speeches. The Left Party supports the central goals of German rearmament and war policy while at the same time offering to politically control the growing opposition to it and subordinate it to right-wing political forces.

The “firewall” is a fraud

Against this background, no one should indulge the illusion that the Left Party would never collaborate with right-wing extremists out of principled opposition to the AfD.

It has already done so. In 2020, then Thuringian Minister President Ramelow gave his vote to AfD politician Michael Kaufmann in the election for vice president of the Thuringian state parliament and justified this with the “parliamentary participation” to which every parliamentary

group was entitled.

The development is even clearer in the case of Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW). Wagenknecht was one of the best-known leading figures of the PDS and the Left Party for more than three decades. Today, she openly declares the “firewall” to have failed and calls for shifting majorities with the AfD. Before the Saxony-Anhalt election, she announced that the BSW could abstain in the decisive ballot for minister president—an action that could enable an AfD candidate to be elected. After the election, the BSW leadership again declared its readiness for joint issue-based policies with the AfD.

This development is not limited to Germany. In Greece, Syriza, the sister party of the Left Party, governed with the far-right Independent Greeks (Anel) and imposed the brutal austerity dictates of the troika of the European Central Bank, European Commission and International Monetary Fund against the population. The German Left Party supported Syriza in this. In late February 2015, it voted in the Bundestag for the austerity dictate and subsequently defended Syriza’s betrayal.

The Left Party and the BSW are currently pursuing different tactical paths, but they defend the same capitalist order. Wagenknecht is openly turning to the AfD. The leadership of the Left Party binds workers and young people to the CDU, SPD and Greens and declares them the “democratic camp.” Both block an independent socialist movement of the working class.

The same applies to the pseudo-left groups inside and around the Left Party, which criticize its current orientation to the CDU but nevertheless insist that one must not break with the party. In this way, they prevent precisely the political reckoning and the building of an independent socialist workers’ party that is necessary to pull the ground from under the extreme right and stop the ruling class’s turn to fascism and militarism.

Despite its high election result, the AfD is not a fascist mass movement on the model of the NSDAP, the Nazi Party (also known as the National Socialist German Workers’ Party). Many of its voters are not convinced right-wing extremists. They voted for the AfD out of anger at the federal government, the decay of social infrastructure, job cuts and war policy, and from the experience that the supposedly left-wing parties implement the same policies as the traditionally right-wing parties. This anger is real, but the AfD channels it in a reactionary direction.

It must be directed at its real cause—the capitalist profit system. The ruling class is not turning to the right because individual politicians make wrong decisions. The capitalist crisis, the intensified struggle for markets and raw materials in a developing Third World War and growing social resistance are driving the ruling elites internationally toward militarism, authoritarianism and fascism.

That is why the struggle against the AfD cannot be waged in alliance with the bourgeois parties but only against the CDU, SPD, Greens and Left Party. Their policies have created the social and political ground on which the extreme right is growing.

The fight against fascism and militarism requires an independent offensive by the working class against social cuts, layoffs, rearmament and war, and against their common cause: capitalism. It requires a political break with the Left Party and all forces that bind the working class to it and to the profit system.

The decisive task is to build a new socialist leadership in the working class—the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International. Only the international working class, armed with a revolutionary socialist program, can prevent the renewed descent into fascism and a Third World War.



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