

AfD and Wagenknecht's BSW celebrate together after electing Germany's first far-right state parliament president

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The scene is nauseating. Around twenty deputies of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the five from the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) are celebrating together in Magdeburg over the election of a far-right state parliament president, toasting each other in the best of spirits. They have just elected AfD politician Tobias Rausch to head the Saxony-Anhalt state parliament (Landtag) and the fascist ideologue Hans-Thomas Tillschneider as his deputy.

The invitation to the celebration came from Jürgen Elsässer, head of the far-right *Compact* magazine, which has opened a new TV studio in Magdeburg and reported the event on social media. At the celebration they also agreed on how the AfD and the BSW would jointly push a motion through the state parliament and pass speaking time to each other. In this way, they lay the foundation for longer-term cooperation.

The new state premier will be elected in December. Until now, the BSW has claimed that it would not help AfD candidate Ulrich Siegmund win a majority in the first two rounds of voting, which require a candidate to achieve an absolute majority of all members, not just of votes cast. But after the joint celebration, that is in doubt. Even so, Siegmund could still win the secret ballot in the third round, in which only a plurality of the votes cast is required.

If proof were needed that the far-right AfD and Sahra Wagenknecht's party are close not only on individual political questions but also in programme and outlook, and personally, this evening has provided it.

The event was so repellent that the BSW leadership felt compelled to distance itself. Wagenknecht called the celebration "completely out of order." While it was right to talk to all parties in the state parliament, she

said, such a dinner overstepped the mark. BSW leader Fabio De Masi warned that no impression of "cronyism or a privileged partnership" must be allowed to arise. National executive member Klaus Ernst even threatened to leave the party.

But the fact that the spectacle is embarrassing to the BSW leadership does not mean there is no basis for it. Political positions and programmes have their own inescapable logic.

The *World Socialist Web Site*, and before it the German-language *Neue Arbeiterpresse*, have followed Sahra Wagenknecht's trajectory continuously since the 1990s. She joined the Stalinist state party, the Socialist Unity Party (SED), in 1989, shortly before it renamed itself the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and supported the dissolution of East Germany (GDR). Within the PDS she then became spokeswoman for the "Communist Platform" and served the party as a left-wing fig leaf.

What attracted Wagenknecht to the SED and PDS was not communism but Stalinism—the rule of a privileged bureaucracy that rejected the perspective of world socialist revolution, suppressed the working class, used state property for its own enrichment and finally liquidated that property in order to anchor its privileges in capitalist private property.

When the PDS merged with the WASG (Labour and Social Justice-The Electoral Alternative) in 2007 to form Die Linke (Left Party), Wagenknecht was briefly a member of the internal party faction "Anti-capitalist Left." But she soon distanced herself from it. In 2011 she committed herself unreservedly to capitalism.

Since then, she has moved steadily further to the right. In 2021 her book *Die Selbstgerechten* (*The Self-*

Righteous Ones) appeared, a tirade against cosmopolitanism and openness to the world. It advocates protectionism and a strong state and denounces immigrants and refugees as wage depressors, strikebreakers and culturally alien elements. The book anticipated the programme of the BSW, which partly overlaps with that of the AfD: a mixture of social demagoguery, empty peace rhetoric, crude nationalism and agitation against refugees.

Wagenknecht speaks for social layers that for a long time were occupied with keeping class antagonisms under control—trade union bureaucrats, Stalinist and social democratic functionaries. In the post-World War II decades, this was still associated with social concessions and rising living standards. But that has long ceased to be the case.

The gulf between rich and poor, the increase in arms spending, the bitter struggle for raw materials and markets and the greed of the financial markets demand the destruction of all social and democratic gains. This is the reason for the shift to the right of all pro-capitalist parties, including the trade unions, and for the rise of far-right parties.

The Wagenknecht party takes this development to its ultimate conclusion and in doing so converges with the AfD, which is being deliberately built up and strengthened in order to intimidate and suppress social and political opposition from the left. The other parties, including Die Linke, have no answer to it. This too was vividly demonstrated in Magdeburg.

The first joint motion that the AfD and BSW carried to a majority at a special session of the state parliament was titled “Peace talks instead of escalating the war in Ukraine.” It demands an immediate ceasefire, an end to German aid for Ukraine and an end to sanctions against Russia.

Of course, this is pure symbolism. A resolution of the Magdeburg state parliament has no impact on federal policy. And neither the AfD nor the BSW are “peace parties.” The AfD thinks the rearmament of the Bundeswehr (armed forces) does not go far enough, and the BSW too supports a strong Bundeswehr in principle. They are of the view, however, that Russia is the wrong enemy. BSW parliamentary group leader Claudia Wittig justified the motion by saying that “you cannot defeat a nuclear power on the battlefield.”

The debate over the motion vividly showed that the

Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens and Die Linke are no alternative to the AfD. They closed ranks to justify a war that threatens to plunge Germany and Europe into nuclear catastrophe. Although the Putin regime is ever more openly signalling its readiness to use nuclear weapons if it is cornered further by NATO, not one of them is prepared to take a step back to avoid a disaster. For them, the interests of German imperialism rank higher than the lives of millions of people.

The fight against war, social devastation and fascism requires a movement of the international working class that is independent of all establishment parties and the trade unions and fights for the overthrow of capitalism.



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