

The Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance drops its fake left mask in Thuringia, Germany

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Almost three months after state elections in Thuringia, the Christian Democrats (CDU), the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) and the Social Democrats (SPD) presented a coalition agreement on Friday. If the party committees vote in favour, which is considered likely, CDU leader Mario Voigt will be elected as the state's new Minister President in December.

The 126-page coalition paper confirms what we wrote in an earlier article about the BSW, a right-wing breakaway from the Left Party, Wagenknecht's new party "is not an alternative to the establishment parties, but an attempt to build new props for capitalist rule in the midst of the deepest global crisis of capitalism."

The Thuringia coalition has agreed on a drastic austerity programme that goes hand in hand with a massive beefing up of the state's repressive apparatus and the adoption of the refugee policy of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). As the three parties only have 44 of the 88 seats in the state parliament, they are reliant on the support of at least one of the 32 AfD or 12 Left Party deputies in the event of a vote.

The decisive paragraphs of the coalition agreement can be found at the bottom of page 118, in the chapter "State budget and finances," where it states that in view of "a structural budget deficit of over 1.3 billion euros, we will take immediate measures to consolidate the state budget." With a total budget of €13.5 billion, this means cuts of 10 percent.

The debt brake, preventing additional borrowing, is to be maintained. "Shifts in the budget and prioritisation of expenditure will be essential in order to set up spending that complies with the debt brake," the coalition agreement states. This means that higher expenditures, e.g., for the agreed recruitment of 1,800 additional police officers, must be offset by additional savings in other areas.

The paper does provide for a "modernisation" of the debt brake and some accounting tricks, such as longer repayment periods for emergency loans. But such measures will not be nearly enough to plug the huge budget gap, let alone finance additional expenditure.

Against this backdrop, large parts of the coalition agreement read like a wish letter to Father Christmas. One gets the impression that each party was able to write whatever they wanted into it in order to fool their voters. Yet everyone knew

that the promised measures would fall victim to the red pencil.

The first chapter, "Education, science and innovation," pompously promises to make Thuringia "the leading education state in Germany." After-school care fees are to be abolished, all-day programmes expanded and "a healthy, warm and free lunch in schools and kindergartens" introduced. The "recruitment of additional teachers" is intended to ensure "the basis for 100 percent teaching coverage at all schools. Most recently, ten percent of lessons in Thuringia were cancelled due to a shortage of teachers.

Universities, science, culture and sport are also to be promoted, medical care improved and Thuringia strengthened as a "state of innovation and growth, of good work and good wages" by supporting large and small companies. At the moment, the average salary for full-time employees in Thuringia, in the former East Germany, is around a fifth below the national average.

There is not a word in the coalition agreement on the question of how all these promises are to be financed from a shrinking budget. However, the coalition partners are obviously expecting massive resistance if the scam is exposed. There is no other explanation for the great emphasis they are placing on strengthening the state security apparatus and taking action against refugees.

The chapter on migration is pure AfD policy. It promises "a change of direction in migration policy" and aims to divide the working class by scapegoating refugees and asylum seekers for the social crisis and systematically persecuting them. "We will create orderly and regulated processes by accelerating the search for people obliged to leave the country who have absconded and by bundling and accelerating appeals in asylum procedures," the coalition agreement states.

"Persons with little prospect of remaining" are no longer to be distributed to the municipalities, but rather held "in community centres in the state." People who are required to leave the country should not be entitled to the full amount of social benefits and the limited payment card given to asylum seekers and refugees in lieu of cash benefits should be implemented quickly throughout Thuringia. A centralised state immigration authority is to be created in order to bundle all measures more effectively.

The coalition agreement promises that “we will reduce irregular entry into Germany” and is fully in favour of the Fortress Europe policy. It calls for the “expansion of the list of safe countries of origin, in particular to include Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia,” the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which is turning Europe into an impenetrable fortress, and “asylum procedures at the EU’s external borders.”

In order to suppress political and social resistance and to hunt down and deport migrants, the state surveillance and repression apparatus is to be massively upgraded. In addition to the recruitment of 1,800 additional police officers over the next five years, the coalition agreement promises: “We will bring the Thuringia police force up to date with additional vehicles and modern equipment, such as digital end devices, body-cams and the testing of the use of remote electro-pulse devices [TASERS] as well as a pilot project for the use of dash-cams.”

Thuringia’s Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the domestic secret service is called, is also to be strengthened. The previous state executive under Left Party politician Bodo Ramelow had originally promised its abolition since it was shown to have set up and financed the far-right structures from which emerged the neo-Nazi NSU terrorist group responsible for numerous murders, and had allowed them to operate for years, with so-called state-financed “undercover agents” playing a supportive role. But in the end, Ramelow left the domestic secret service intact and merely replaced its top management.

Now this right-wing extremist agency is to be given greater resources “in terms of personnel, organisation and technology” in order to be better “capable of acting.” The use of undercover agents, as had been widespread in the case of the NSU, is to remain explicitly possible, while the Office for the Protection of the Constitution is also to be given access to the internet and phone traffic data of “known extremists” and “the authorisation to conduct online searches.”

“We defend our constitutional state and our democracy against all threats to the free and democratic basic order from extremism, hate crimes and hate speech, whether analogue or digital. We therefore resolutely oppose all forms of extremism through prevention and repression,” reads the explanatory statement. This is an undisguised threat against any political opposition.

Media coverage of the coalition negotiations in Thuringia focussed primarily on the BSW’s demand it distance itself from the war in Ukraine in the preamble to the coalition agreement. At times, conflicts arose between Wagenknecht and the Thuringia BSW chairwoman Katja Wolf, who was satisfied with a weaker formulation.

But even on this issue, Wagenknecht has dropped her mask. Although this was always just a symbolic gesture, as foreign and military policy is decided by the federal government, there can no longer be any talk of a rejection of the war or of German

arms deliveries to Ukraine.

The preamble now only mentions the joint desire for a “diplomatic initiative” to “end the war of aggression unleashed by Russia against Ukraine”—a formulation that Ukrainian President Zelensky could also accept. With regard to the stationing of new American medium-range missiles in Germany, which the BSW had also called to be rejected, it now states: “We take a critical view of stationing and their use without German involvement.”

The coalition agreement itself is fully committed to a strong Bundeswehr (Armed Forces): “We stand by the Bundeswehr’s task of protecting Germany and its citizens. We are committed to the Bundeswehr bases in Thuringia. In order to remain a sustainable location for the Bundeswehr, we want to put an end to the backlog of refurbishment work and realise necessary construction projects as quickly as possible.”

In Brandenburg, where coalition negotiations between the SPD and the BSW are about to be finalised, the BSW is also backing away from its anti-war rhetoric. According to a report in *Tagesspiegel*, it has given up its demand for an end to the Russia sanctions and its opposition to the establishment of new defence companies and the International Aerospace Exhibition in Schönefeld.

The Erfurt Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Thuringia Association of Family Businesses and the German Confederation of Trade Unions have welcomed the coalition agreement between the CDU, BSW and SPD. They will work closely with the new government to enforce austerity measures against the working class.

Wagenknecht founded her party less than a year ago, and it has now entered two state governments. That is a historic record. But its downfall promises to be even more rapid. Rarely before has a party shown its true colours so quickly.



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