

## The Founding of the Left Party (June 16, 2007)

### Abstract

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In the lead-up to the 2005 Bundestag elections, former SPD chairman Oskar Lafontaine and PDS politician Gregor Gysi spearheaded a collaboration between the PDS and the Electoral Alternative for Labor and Social Justice [*Wahlalternative für Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit* or WASG], the latter of which had been founded to protest Agenda 2010. On June 10, 2005, Lafontaine and Gysi were publicly presented as the top candidates of this new alliance. WASG members ran for Bundestag seats on the open ticket of the Left Party/PDS, which had renamed itself in July 2005. In the 2005 elections, the Left Party/PDS garnered a respectable 8.7 percent of the second vote. After members of the WASG and the Left Party/PDS voted in favor of an official merger, the new Left Party was founded on June 16, 2007. Despite the merger, the perennial conflict between pragmatists and ideologists remained unresolved. The pragmatists (who were mostly from regional chapters in East Germany and who often had experience governing at the state [*Land*] level) were prepared to compromise and form coalitions with the SPD in order to participate in the government, whereas the ideologists (who included members of the Communist platform, disenchanted former SPD members, and trade unionists) called for strict boundaries between the Left Party and the SPD. The Left Party won 11.9 percent of the second vote in the 2010 Bundestag elections. On January 23, 2010, however, Lafontaine announced his withdrawal from federal politics for health reasons.

This photo shows Oskar Lafontaine (left) and Lothar Bisky (right) at the Left Party's founding convention. The two politicians were appointed co-chairmen of the new party.

### Source

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