

Politicians and media promote far-right Alternative for Germany

Johannes Stern
31 March 2016

While the success of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in three state elections March 13 horrified many workers and young people, politicians and the media are now courting the far-right party. The friendly overtures extend from the Left Party adopting the AfD's slogans to direct offers of coalition from the Christian Democrats.

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) parliamentary deputy Klaus-Peter Willsch held out the prospect of future coalitions with the AfD. One must “look soberly at who we have the most overlap with: the Social Democrats, the Greens or the AfD. Because I see the most overlap with the AfD,” he told *Spiegel Online*. The chairman of the Christian Democrats parliamentary group, Georg Nüsslein, advised “not to simply force the AfD into the right-wing populist corner.”

Sarah Wagenknecht, the leader of the Left Party parliamentary group, expressed similar sentiments and said that one should not “paint as racists all those who worry about jobs, social benefits, accommodation and rising rents as a result of the high numbers of refugees.” This also applied to AfD voters, she said. Following its catastrophic election defeat, the Left Party is not only advocating electoral alliances with the CDU, Wagenknecht's populist and nationalist course is hardly distinguishable from that of the AfD.

While all the establishment parties are moving politically in the direction of the AfD, the media is painting it as a normal democratic party. The latest highpoint is an interview with two leading AfD politicians, Frauke Petry and Marcus Pretzell, in the current edition of *Bunte* magazine. Under the sensationalist headline, “How dangerous is this party?” is a picture showing the AfD spokeswoman and her partner sitting on the ground laughing. Petry sits next to Pretzell looking “girlish and sweet,” the magazine remarks. Pretzell also endeavours to look charming.

This revolting attempt to build up these two extreme right-wing figures as new political stars has also found an echo in the “serious” bourgeois media. Above all, the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* represents a prime example of the

sharp turn to the right undergone by the German elite in the last weeks. In its current edition can be found an extensive interview with Petry, including an entire page of glossy photos. The AfD leader is presented by *Der Spiegel* as a serious politician worthy of state office.

Petry is being offered a platform for her right-wing propaganda. Among other things, she could declare, “we believe that a healthy patriotism should be self-evident in Germany.” Without a “healthy relationship to one's own identity, it was not possible to act in a forward-looking way at home and abroad.” The AfD held that “politicians exclusively cloaking themselves in guilt” were wrong. The German past was being used “to prevent the resurrection of a German nationalism once and for all,” and that “disastrous migration policies” had been justified “with reference to Germany's past.”

Without being contradicted, Petry agitates against Muslim refugees and attacks the policies of Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) using right-wing populist slogans. What was clear, she claimed, is that “the immigration of so many Muslims will change our culture,” and despite this, Chancellor Angela Merkel had “simply opened up the borders and invited everyone in, without asking parliament and the people.”

For *Der Spiegel*, these views are now no longer right-wing but part of the political “centre.” In the lead article in its last edition, titled “Welcome!” Germany's most-read newsweekly declared, “In light of the election results, the AfD must be re-evaluated and dealings with it re-assessed.” A party that achieves 15 percent in Baden-Württemberg and 24 percent in Saxony Anhalt, was “also a party of the centre, as hard as it may be to recognise this.”

The attempt of *Der Spiegel* to deny the essentially right-wing character of the AfD, which was merely in charge of a “small, populist-racist block,” is absurd. In reality, the party leadership not only enjoys close links to the far-right but also advocates extreme militarist, anti-democratic and populist-racist positions.

Two examples: In 2012 in the *Tagesspiegel*, the deputy

AfD spokesman Alexander Gauland accused Germans of “lacking esteem in the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces].” After two lost world wars, they must finally put an end to their “whole-body pacifism” and learn again from Bismarck that “the great questions of the time” can only be decided “through blood and iron.”

During the 2014 state elections in Saxony, Petry herself had justified a referendum on abortion and harsher immigration policies with the demand, “German politicians had a responsibility to secure the survival of their own people, their own nation.” In an interview at the end of January, she demanded that police officers must “use their service weapons, if necessary” in order to prevent illegal border crossings.

Der Spiegel knows well that it is dealing with extreme right-wing political forces when it comes to Petry, Gauland and the entire AfD. Just a few weeks ago, it ran a cover picture of Gauland and Petry standing in a fascist pose, titled “The Preachers of Hate.” In the cover story, headlined “In the trenches,” they said: “The AfD ... is a dangerous party. It is gathering together right-wing radicals and agitators who play with fire. Its existence, 70 years after the end of the war, throws up the question, what has Germany learned and understood from the dictatorship.” The AfD appears “to be becoming a German National Front: xenophobic, chauvinist, anti-European.”

How is the sudden change of opinion by *Der Spiegel* to be explained?

A glance at the editors responsible is instructive. Significantly, the interview with Petry was conducted by Jan Fleischhauer. His weekly column, titled “The Black Channel,” is repulsive, and its racist, militarist and anti-democratic undertones mean it could easily appear in the AfD party newspaper.

The author of the lead article welcoming the AfD is Dirk Kurbjuweit, who has long argued for the revival of German militarism. In 2010, *Der Spiegel* published an article titled, “Taming the Beast. Regarding the difficult relationship of democracy and war.” Its central argument: The war in Afghanistan was so important for the strategic interests of German imperialism that it must be conducted despite heavy losses and against the will of people.

In February 2014, Kurbjuweit then wrote a story on “World War I Guilt,” in which he argues for a “revision” of accounts of the crimes of German imperialism in the first and second world wars. As chief witness for this “transformation,” he introduces the Humboldt professors Herfried Münkler (Political Theory) and Jörg Baberowski (History), as well as the most famous recent German Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte.

Among other things, Kurbjuweit cited Nolte’s words,

referring to the outbreak of World War II, “I am more and more convinced that we should attach more weight to the role played by the Poles and the British than is usually the case.” At the same time, Nolte accuses the Jews of their “own share of the gulag” because some Bolsheviks were Jews. Although Kurbjuweit comments that this has “long been an argument of anti-Semites,” he adds, “But not everything this man [Nolte] says is wrong.” Then he quotes Baberowski, a declared supporter of Nolte, saying: “Hitler was no psychopath, and he wasn’t vicious. He didn’t want people to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table.”

The foreword of the book *Scholarship or War Propaganda*, which examines the deeper historical, political and social causes for the sharp turn to the right by the ruling elites, and which was recently presented to a large audience at the Leipzig Book Fair, states:

“Such historical falsifications were previously voiced only by ultra-right and fascist circles. Their promotion today is closely linked with the attempts of the German government to revive German militarism. The article in *Der Spiegel* appeared ten days after the Munich Security Conference, where German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen announced that Germany was ‘too large and too important’ to stay out of crisis regions and areas of conflict in the world. It was also published ten days before the coup in Kiev that brought to power a right-wing, anti-Russian regime backed by Berlin and Washington.”

Since then, the German government has intensified its military war programme. Under the pretext of the fight against Islamic State (IS), it has sent weapons and soldiers to Syria and Iraq, agreed to a new military mission in Mali and massively increased the defence budget.

The courting of the AfD is a warning. In the deepest crisis of European and international capitalism since the 1930s, the German elites are once again ready to place their hopes in an extreme right-wing party in order to defend the interests of German imperialism with increasing violence at home and abroad.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact