

The far-right Alternative for Germany enters parliament

Johannes Stern
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The convening of the new Bundestag (federal parliament) marks a sharp political turning point in Germany. Seventy-two years after the end of the Hitler dictatorship, Nazis, right-wing extremists, demagogues, racists and xenophobes are once again sitting in the German parliament. The first sitting on 25 October has already underscored that the political influence of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) faction goes far beyond its numerical strength. With its issues of halting the influx of refugees and increasing the powers of the state, it is now also setting the tone in parliament.

“The people have decided. Now, a new epoch begins,” threatened Bernd Baumann, parliamentary leader of the AfD, who was the first spokesman for the right-wing extremist group to address the Bundestag. “From this moment on, issues will be dealt with differently here”, for example “the euro, the taking on of gigantic debts, huge immigration figures, open borders and increasingly brutal crime on our streets”.

Albrecht Glaser, the AfD candidate, failed to be elected as president of the Bundestag in all three election rounds, but this cannot disguise the fact that the establishment parties are ready to work closely with the AfD. Significantly, Glaser received 121 votes in the second election round, 31 more votes than there are AfD members in the Bundestag. The honorary Bundestag president (the most senior parliamentarian by age), Hermann Otto Solms (Free Democratic Party, FDP), welcomed Baumann as a “colleague”.

In his speech, Solms said he was open to an agreement with the AfD. “As Federal President Frank Walter Steinmeier once said in his speech on German unity: ‘Controversy, yes, but no irreconcilability may arise from differences’.” He could only “agree” with the former Social Democratic Party (SPD) foreign minister. Germany needed “less ideological trench warfare than problem-oriented solutions”.

This course is supported by all the parliamentary parties. For example, the speaker of the Left Party, Jan Korte, called for “more discourse in this Bundestag” and “a sign to those who have turned away”. For this he received applause from numerous deputies of the SPD and the AfD!

There is no doubt that the Left Party will also cooperate well with the AfD in the parliamentary committees. Sahra Wagenknecht, chair of the Left Party parliamentary group, has already been praised by Alexander Gauland, the new parliamentary chairman of the AfD, for her outbursts against refugees. In Greece, Syriza, the sister party of the Left Party, is in a coalition with the right-wing conservative Independent Greeks (ANEL), who are linked with the AfD at a European level.

To fight against the dangerous right-wing development in Germany and Europe as a whole, its political and social roots must be understood. Under conditions of the deepest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s, the ruling class has been deliberately promoting neo-fascist forces to push through its policies of militarism, increasing state powers and social devastation against the growing opposition of the population.

In the case of the AfD, it is clear whose offspring it is. It does not represent the interests of the “people”, but those of the ruling class. A majority of its more than 90 parliamentary deputies have been recruited directly from the state apparatus, especially from the military, the judiciary and the police, and/or were previously members of an establishment party. For example, Baumann started his career as an assistant to the billionaire German publisher Hubert Burda, according to Wikipedia.

The same parties that are politically and ideologically responsible for the rise of the AfD now use its entry into parliament to form a new, right-wing government. Significantly, shortly after the end of the first parliamentary session, a mass deportation to Afghanistan

of about 50 refugees took place. The fact that the former finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) was elected by a large majority as the new President of the Bundestag also speaks volumes. Like no other, Schäuble stands for the austerity policies dictated by Brussels and Berlin, which have devastated entire countries like Greece and plunged millions into poverty.

A so-called “Jamaica” coalition (after the party colours) of the Christian Democrats, the Greens and the neo-liberal FDP, which the parties have been officially exploring since Tuesday, would push forward the attacks on the working class and the militarization of Europe internally and externally. In a programmatic interview in the current edition of news weekly *Der Spiegel*, former Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer declares, “Jamaica is a necessity.” In view of the “great problems of the 21st century” and the “dramatic changes we see globally, among other things with Brexit and the election of Donald Trump,” more German leadership is needed.

“Those responsible will come into the situation, in which they have to lead,” continues Fischer. “Simply because the conditions today are what they are.” The pressure “of the realities” will become “enormous”. Fischer leaves no doubt that he means by this: new German military campaigns and a massive increase in state powers at home. “We already experienced that with Red-Green [SPD-Green government]. We were not even in office when the question of the Kosovo war had to be answered,” he said.

Fischer’s interview throws a spotlight on the rightward turn of a social stratum, which has been regarded as “left-wing” since the 1968 student movement. Based on the anti-Marxist theories of the Frankfurt School and post-modernism, it always rejected an orientation to the working class, and focused on questions of identity, the environment, and ultimately the increase in its own personal wealth. Under conditions of extreme social polarization, its representatives, such as the former street fighter Fischer, are ready to come to an arrangement with the extreme right they had fought in an earlier period. Although Fischer admits that the AfD stands in the tradition of the Nazis, he recommends “a certain basic equanimity” in dealing with it.

Behind Fischer’s “basic equanimity” towards Nazis is a policy that is no less reactionary than that of the AfD. “I prefer Macron and France to Kurz, Strache and Austria,” he said cynically. This praise for the French president means support for the permanent state of emergency in

France, with which Macron is suppressing resistance to his labour reforms, massive social attacks and the policies of the European Union.

Just a few days ago, in a guest contribution for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Fischer defended the brutal suppression of Catalonia by the right-wing government in Madrid. “It would be an historical absurdity,” wrote Fischer, “if the European Union member states were to enter a phase of secession and disintegration in the 21st century, where given the new global powers—China, India, USA, etc.—the common future of Europeans requires more cohesion and integration.”

The ruling class is worried not about the rise of the extreme right, but about the growing resistance from the left against its military great-power plans and social inequality. That is the reason why the SPD has tentatively decided to go into opposition and its leader Martin Schulz hypocritically criticized capitalism in an interview in *Die Zeit*. The SPD, in close cooperation with the Left Party and the trade unions, wants to hinder the development of a genuine left-wing and Marxist opposition to the new right-wing government and the AfD.

The sharp turn to right of all the establishment parties shows that the struggle against the spectres of the past requires a revolutionary policy. Together with its sister organizations in the International Committee of the Fourth International, the Socialist Equality Party in Germany fights for a programme that combines the fight against social inequality, fascism and war with the struggle against capitalism and for a socialist society. One hundred years after the October Revolution in Russia, once again the construction of a socialist mass party that expropriates the wealth of the financial elite and uses it to end massive social inequality is the only way to prevent a relapse into barbarism.



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