

The way forward in the struggle against the far-right danger in Germany

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Last weekend, nearly a quarter million people marched in Berlin, Germany to protest militarism, racism, and the promotion of the extreme right by Germany's grand coalition government. The demonstration, dubbed "#indivisible" by its organizers, was the largest mass protest in the country since marches against the Iraq war in 2003.

Some of the placards displayed at the protests, many of which were homemade, read, "No to the witch-hunting of Muslims," "No place for Nazis," and "Racism is no alternative." One banner bore the declaration, "Solidarity with the victims of right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic violence."

In discussions with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters, demonstrators described Germany's secret service as a right-wing extremist stronghold, and condemned the establishment parties' embrace of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The Bavarian state election held the following day also underscored the deep gulf between the political elite and the left-wing sentiments of broad sections of the population. After the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats saw their worst results in 70 years at last year's federal election, the CSU and SPD all but collapsed in Bavaria, losing more than 21 percentage points. The SPD in Bavaria, which was in opposition, lost even more votes than the governing CSU. With just 9.5 percent of the vote, the SPD achieved its worst ever state election result.

The right-wing extremist AfD also lost a substantial number of votes. While in last year's federal election the AfD secured 12.4 percent of the vote in Bavaria, it won just 10.2 percent of the vote in Sunday's state election. In other words: although Germany's ruling elite, and its leading parties and media mouthpieces, have systematically promoted the AfD and legitimised right-wing extremist conceptions, the far-right party lost some 231,000 votes, or a quarter of its voters.

These developments confirm two central positions taken by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality

Party—SGP).

First, the AfD does not reflect widespread far-right sentiments in the population, but has rather been encouraged by the ruling elite in order to impose its policies of social austerity and war in the face of popular opposition. "Despite all of the distancing from the Nazis' crimes, German democracy is as fragile as it was in the past," wrote the SGP in its statement distributed at the demonstration. "As soon as the ruling elite adopts a new imperialist course and feels opposition from below, they show their preference for the far-right."

Second, the struggle against the far-right menace requires a socialist perspective. Political outrage and mass protests are necessary, but not sufficient. To prevent the ruling class from once again pursuing their reactionary agenda by promoting fascistic forces, it is necessary to build an international socialist movement capable of combining opposition to social inequality, the rise of the far-right, and war with the struggle against capitalism.

After the events of this past weekend, the question of a socialist strategy to oppose the far-right is posed with renewed urgency. The entire ruling elite is responding to the widespread opposition at the ballot box and in the streets with a further shift to the right. The ruling elite is closing ranks, suppressing all forms of democratic opposition, and intensifying its political conspiracy against the population.

Former SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel urged the grand coalition government to hire "more police" and not to concede to pressure from the streets. "Provoking a new government crisis by giving up the ghost certainly won't make Germany any more stable," he told the *Bild* newspaper. Germany is "too large to focus solely on ourselves. And the world will only listen to us if we hold Europe together."

In her government statement on Wednesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel struck the same reactionary tone. She demanded a further crackdown on refugees, calling for "joint improvements" in "protecting the external borders" and "repatriations." Another issue was tightening "domestic

security.” For the European elections, the government is planning “to create guidelines for parties which actively spread disinformation in their campaigns.”

The implications of this are clear. Under the pretext of combatting “disinformation,” Google has been censoring left-wing and progressive news outlets, including the *World Socialist Web Site*, in close collaboration with the German government. In the grand coalition's latest report by the domestic intelligence agency, all opposition to capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, and militarism was criminalized as “left-wing extremist” and “anti-constitutional.” The SGP was labelled as a “left-wing extremist party” and an “object for observation.”

The government is able to act so aggressively only because it is supported by the state apparatus and de facto by the “left-wing” opposition parties. Twenty years after the Green Party organised Germany's first military intervention in the post-war era in the face of bitter opposition, they have shifted far to the right on domestic and refugee policy. Wherever they are part of governing coalitions, they have strengthened the security forces and organised brutal deportations of refugees. In Bavaria, they are hoping for a coalition with the CSU of Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, who explicitly defended the recent neo-Nazi rampage in Chemnitz.

Left Party parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht accused Merkel in her statement on Wednesday of being “a lame duck in the Chancellor's office,” and complained “that Germany currently has a government incapable of functioning.” At an event last week, she openly disassociated her party from the mass protests in Berlin and described the idea of “open borders” as “unreal and completely impractical.” It is only a matter of time before Wagenknecht agrees to a deal with the extreme right. Wagenknecht is a “brave voice of reason,” enthused AfD leader Alexander Gauland, who recently authored an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that was based in large part on a speech by Hitler in 1933.

The media is playing a central role in the political conspiracy to promote the far right. While they promote the AfD, give generous coverage to every anti-refugee demonstration, and describe neo-Nazis as “concerned citizens,” hardly any reports appeared on the mass demonstration in Berlin. Commentators openly denounced the demonstration. The Berlin-based *Tagesspiegel* provocatively accused the organisers of illegal censorship for their banning of German flags and AfD members.

Influential circles in politics, the media, intelligence agencies, and military are working behind the scenes to grant the AfD even more power in Berlin. The entry of the AfD into parliament has “produced some positive changes,”

declared parliamentary president Wolfgang Schäuble in an interview with *Bild am Sonntag*. “The grand coalition's majority” is “not as clear-cut as it was during the last legislative period,” and this makes “the debates more exciting,” he added.

Referring to the AfD's fascist and racist tirades on the floor of parliament, Schäuble declared that such “tough” rhetoric “is not so bad that we need to be concerned about it.”

Under these conditions, the SGP is renewing its call for new elections. A clique of right-wing conspirators without any mandate cannot be permitted to install a right-wing dictatorship, rearm Germany, and compel the population to pay the bloody price. In an election campaign, the SGP would mobilise all of its forces and resources to expose the ruling elite's reactionary policies and build a socialist alternative to capitalism, war and authoritarianism.

We demand the following:

- * Stop the conspiracy by the grand coalition, the state apparatus, and right-wing extremists!

- * Mass opposition to the extreme right must be mobilised on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme.

- * No more war! Stop Germany's return to a militarist great power policy!

- * For the dissolution of the secret service and an immediate halt to the surveillance of the SGP and other left organizations!

- * Defend the right to asylum! No to the militarisation of the state and surveillance!

- * End poverty and exploitation—for social equality! The wealth of the financial elite, together with the banks and corporations, must be expropriated and placed under democratic control.



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