

Germany: SPD and Greens act as stooges for the far-right in Hamburg

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The coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens which controls the Hamburg Senate is acting as an extension of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) against anti-fascist students, teachers and parents. This has been exemplified by recent events surrounding the Ida Ehre School, which have met with widespread outrage in broad sections of the population.

In a motion to the state Senate on March 1, 2019, AfD representatives Alexander Wolf and Detlef Ehlebracht called for action to be taken against “anti-constitutional left-wing extremist activities at the Ida Ehre school, tolerated by the teaching staff and school management.”

The impetus was a collection of political stickers and photos which had been produced as part of a school project (“Get involved—Art as cultural competence”) and a photo contest exhibited at the school. The school is known for its commitment to fight racism and for encouraging students to form their own opinions and express them freely.

The education authority immediately ordered an inspection of the school and had all anti-fascist stickers, photos and writings removed. This happened in the middle of the spring break, when neither the school leadership, nor students and teachers had the opportunity to comment on the allegations and defend themselves. The state minister responsible for the school board is Ties Rabe (SPD).

In response to the AfD motion, the education authority justified its censorship measures by saying that while students were free to formulate their political views in the classroom, political advertising in schools was not allowed. It therefore supported the claim of the AfD that anti-fascism had no place in schools and should be classified as “left-wing extremism.”

Encouraged by the Senate’s actions, Wolf stepped up his agitation against the school and its students. The state executive’s response had revealed “how left-wing extremists at a school could freely propagate their ideology and recruit students for their violence-oriented organization.” The lawyer and “old man” of the right-wing extremist Danubia fraternity railed about a supposedly “left-

leaning teaching staff” and a “left-wing extremist network” at Ida Ehre.

Several Hamburg press outlets, including the *Morgenpost*, the *Hamburger Abendblatt* and *Bild* repeated the accusations of the AfD in sensational articles and presented them as facts. The *Hamburger Abendblatt* wrote that the teachers of the Ida Ehre school were either naive or themselves followed left-wing extremist views.

The AfD boasted on its website, “AfD Group reveals left-wing network at district school. The authorities confirm legal violations and intervenes.” Wolf added, “Now the masterminds and supporters must also be investigated.”

Last autumn, the far-right AfD had set up a so-called information portal in Hamburg, and later in many other cities. There, students and parents were encouraged to denounce their teachers if they violated the so-called neutrality obligation and purveyed “propaganda” in the classroom, i.e., criticized the AfD. This call for denunciations recalls the Nazi era.

This denunciation portal was used by an AfD supporter in early March to denigrate the Ida Ehre school as a “sort of training ground” for left-wing extremism. A photo posted on the school’s pin board, which was created within the framework of a competition announced by the city (“Protest seeks Motive”), was singled out for criticism. It shows a group with a banner, “Political enlightenment instead of right-wing snitching—and certainly no hate speech! AAO!” The AfD described the photo as “political publicity for a violent group.”

AAO stands for Antifa Altona Ost, which has found many followers among Hamburg school students in recent months and has organized numerous non-violent demonstrations and protests. Although the Hamburg state secret service officially certified the group’s non-violence, it subjects it to surveillance and counts it as part of the Autonom (anarchist) spectrum. The AfD had been particularly outraged by the participation of many students in the campaign “Youth against right-wing hate—for a solidarity society,” in which 35 Hamburg schools took part.

The AfD has deliberately targeted the Ida Ehre school because, as it writes, the school is “proud” of being “part of a political, antifascist school community.”

The school takes its name from the actress and theatre director Ida Ehre, who was banished under the Nazis, arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp because she was Jewish. Ehre only narrowly escaped the fate of her mother and sister, who were killed in the concentration camp.

After the end of the war in 1945, she opened the Hamburger Kammerspiele in a building that had formerly been used as a theatre by the Jewish Cultural Association, until the enforced “Aryanization” in 1941. Ehre wrote in her autobiography, “I felt I had to do something that removed the sleepiness out of people’s eyes, driving fatigue out of their hearts. I wanted to make them think, to think—how was this time behind us, what responsibility do we bear for it, what will we do to shape the future.”

To this day, the school attaches great importance to encouraging political engagement among young people. One class received an award last year for its project “Homelessness in Hamburg.” As part of the “Active for Democracy and Tolerance 2017” competition, the school received not only a certificate but also prize money of €1,000. Many parents decide to send their children to this school precisely because of its focus on education in democracy.

In support of the Ida Ehre school, solidarity activities were conducted by other schools, colleges, pupils, parents and various anti-fascist groups. On March 23, the AAO organized a demonstration in defence of the school. Under the slogan, “anti-fascism is not a crime,” about 3,000 pupils and parents from various schools marched through Hamburg’s city centre with their own banners and placards. The AAO organized an eyewitness conversation on April 13 with Auschwitz survivor Esther Bejarano, and on April 14 another anti-AfD demonstration.

On March 29, students of the Ida Ehre school hung banners on the façade of the upper school building. One reads, “Nazis murder & you are silent, students put up stickers & you scream.”

The AfD responded with a new motion, and again the education authority immediately ordered that the upper school leader personally remove the banners as soon as possible. The Hamburg Senate stressed that the action was “not agreed with the teachers of the Ida Ehre school” and demanded, “State school buildings should be free of political advertising.”

The support of the city authorities has encouraged the AfD faction in the state assembly. AfD group leader Alexander Wolf tabled another motion because the AAO had posted a

photo of the school with the banner “Hamburg’s schools remain red” on their media channels. On March 28, a bomb threat was mailed to the school, which the school administration clearly assessed as “right-wing radical,” and which luckily turned out to be an empty threat.

The cooperation of SPD-Green Senate with the AfD is not limited to the action against the Ida Ehre school. The SPD-led education authority also invited AfD group leader Wolf to a discussion event at the Helene Lange School. The reason for this collaboration is that the SPD and the AfD agree on fundamental political issues—the construction of a police state, refugee policy, militarism.

One year ago, Peter Tschentscher (SPD) succeeded Olaf Scholz, who as vice chancellor and minister of finance in the grand coalition federal government is now continuing the austerity policies of Wolfgang Schäuble. At the G20 summit in July 2017, Scholz set new standards for police brutality and the persecution of demonstrators. To this day, young people involved in the protests are being subjected to draconian jail sentences.

In refugee matters, the Hamburg state executive practices pure AfD policy. It allows people to be dragged from their bed under cover of darkness and deports them. Only a few weeks ago, it became known that a man with renal failure had been deported to Ghana by ambulance—a decision that was practically equivalent to a death sentence.

The events in Hamburg confirm the long-standing warnings of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party)—the establishment parties and the media are opening the way for the AfD ideologically and politically, because German politics is undergoing a turn in foreign and domestic policy. The grand coalition is preparing for new wars. That is why it is also rearming and stepping up state powers, while strengthening right-wing extremist and fascist forces in order to suppress any opposition. At the same time, the Bundeswehr (armed forces) are permitted to purvey their propaganda in schools and universities.



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