

Alternative for Germany shifts further to the right

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The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is positioning itself ever more openly as a fascist party. This was underscored by its party congress held last Saturday in Kalkar, North Rhine-Westphalia.

The congress' proceedings were dominated by bitter conflicts between party leader Jörg Meuthen and the neo-Nazi "Wing" (Flügel) around Thuringia state AfD leader Björn Höcke. But this is merely the form through which the entire party shifts further to the right, tests out its political options and searches for a social base for a mass fascist movement.

Many media outlets portrayed the congress as a conflict between the bourgeois and right-wing extremist forces. But they did the same in 2015, when Frauke Petry ousted party founder Bernd Lucke, and in 2017, when Petry suffered the same fate. At the time, Meuthen was pulling the strings to engineer Petry's ouster in collaboration with Höcke, the party's honorary chairman Alexander Gauland, and parliamentary group leader Alice Weidel. Meuthen has cooperated closely with the right-wing extremists ever since. No journalist can explain how this promoter of right-wing extremists has suddenly become a standard bourgeois politician.

In his speech, Meuthen warned the 600 delegates to moderate their manners and statements. He called for more distance from militant coronavirus deniers, criticised "the pushing and shoving around" in parliament, where guests invited by AfD deputies threatened deputies from other parties, and attacked the honorary chairman Gauland, who had spoken of a "coronavirus dictatorship."

"But is it really wise to talk about a coronavirus dictatorship?" asked Meuthen. "We don't live in a dictatorship, otherwise we would hardly be able to hold this congress as we are doing today."

Meuthen is above all concerned that a too explicit presentation of the AfD's right-wing extremist positions could scare off some voters. The party's poll numbers are

currently well under the level of support it received in 2017, when the AfD emerged as the third largest party with 12.6 percent of the vote. "People will stop voting for us due to such incidents," complained Meuthen. "We won't be successful by appearing increasingly aggressive, rude and uninhibited."

At the congress, Meuthen enjoyed support from delegates in western Germany, who are concerned about losing their parliamentary posts and thus their incomes. However, less than a third of the delegates applauded his speech. Around half of the delegates and the remainder of the party leadership opposed him, which culminated in bitter recriminations. Some loudly called for him to resign and held up red voting cards in protest. The party congress organisers turned the microphone off when several angry speakers opposed him. Gauland described Meuthen's speech as aimed at "splitting" the party and accused him of bowing before the domestic intelligence agency.

Unlike previous congresses, the Kalkar gathering did not result in a split. A motion denouncing Meuthen's "splitting behaviour" was not put to a vote. Meuthen and his opponents have no differences over content. They all advocate the same right-wing extremist, xenophobic, chauvinist and authoritarian policies. They merely have tactical disagreements.

At the end of the congress, 89 percent of the delegates voted to accept the main motion of the federal commission on social policy. The document is a racist and volkish manifesto. It incites hatred against foreigners and contains no genuine social demands or policies to redistribute wealth.

Social policy is for the AfD above all a means to resolve the "demographic crisis" and increase the birth rate. "An increase in the birth rate to a sustained level of 2.1 children per woman is the only way to stabilise and retain our social systems, and also to maintain our culture and

the continued existence of our people,” stated the motion.

Immigrants should be barred from social welfare to the greatest extent possible and repatriated to their countries of origin, it continues. Large sections of the motion amount to a diatribe against foreigners. For example, it blames “the migration of poorly-trained and low-qualified migrants since the 60s” for “the disappearance of German virtues.”

The social policy measures proposed by the AfD cannot even be described as modest. The age of retirement should be freely chosen in line with several options, which would either contribute to an increase in old-age poverty or elderly people in the workforce.

Politicians, the self-employed and newly hired state officials, excluding soldiers, police officers and judicial employees, should be brought into the obligatory pension system and no longer be financially supported by the state—a populist demand aimed at appealing to anger towards those “at the top” while doing nothing to overcome social inequality. The wealthy and those with high incomes would be left unscathed.

The AfD also proposed a form of child premium. Families should receive €20,000 of the parents’ pension contributions in the form of rebates through the tax system, and the state should transfer €100 each month into a savings account for every child who is born as a German citizen and leads their life in Germany.

The AfD is despised among wide layers of the population and has fallen well below 10 percent support in many opinion polls. Their influence is secured thanks above all to the established parties, and the official “left” in particular, for two reasons.

Firstly, the “left” parties are responding to the global capitalist crisis and the coronavirus pandemic with renewed attacks on the working class and lower middle class. As the banks and major corporations are flooded with cash from the government and central bank and the share markets reach new record highs, workers are losing their jobs or being forced to work under life-threatening conditions. Small business owners and the self-employed are being forced into bankruptcy.

The government policies implemented by the Left Party, Social Democrats and Greens do not differ on these issues from the Christian Democrats (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU), or Free Democrats (FDP). This provides the AfD with the opportunity to fish for support among desperate layers of the population with National Socialist demagoguery.

Secondly, the establishment parties are deliberately

paving the way for the AfD. They welcome them into the media and parliaments. The further the AfD shifts to the right, the closer the established parties collaborate with it. The right-wing extremist terrorist networks in the army and police, which have close ties to the AfD, are systematically covered up by the intelligence services and judiciary.

The true relationship between the established parties and the AfD was shown clearly in Thuringia in February, when the CDU, FDP and AfD jointly voted in a new minister president. After he was forced to resign in the face of a wave of protests, Left Party Minister President Bodo Ramelow reached out the hand of cooperation to the AfD and cast the deciding vote to give the party the prestigious post of a parliamentary vice president in Thuringia’s state parliament.

In Saxony Anhalt, the CDU and AfD are currently cooperating closely to block a planned increase in the broadcast licence charge. Their opposition to the unpopular measure is a pretext to pave the way for a government coalition including the AfD.

The promotion of the AfD by the establishment parties has objective roots. The ruling class is relying on the right-wing extremist party to enforce its policies of militarism, the strengthening of the repressive state apparatus, and social spending cuts against mounting opposition among the population. The coronavirus policies pursued by the federal and state governments are virtually identical with those of the far-right “Lateral Thinkers” movement and the AfD. A few activities in the sphere of private life are restricted, but the real super-spreader events—schools, workplaces, and public transport systems—remain open without any safeguards. Profits must flow unhindered, even if this costs large numbers of human lives.

The struggle against the danger posed by the far-right requires the building of an independent movement of the working class that connects the fight against the criminal coronavirus policies, against unemployment and poverty, and against fascism and war, with the struggle to overturn the capitalist profit system. It requires the construction of an international socialist party, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its German section, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei.



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