

At its conference in Dresden, the AfD positions itself as a fascist party

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The Alternative for Germany (AfD) is establishing itself more and more openly as a fascist force. This was made clear at the AfD's conference in Dresden last weekend, held to affirm the party's programme for this year's general election. For two days, party leaders agitated against socialism, indulged in racist diatribes and demanded the end of all coronavirus protections and the massive rearmament of Germany.

The floor was taken by the Thuringia state and parliamentary group leader Björn Höcke, the leader of the now officially disbanded fascist "Flügel" ("Wing") grouping in the AfD. Höcke, like hardly any other top German politician, stands for the filth of Hitler's Third Reich long thought to have been overcome: *völkisch* nationalism, racist thinking and aggressive militarism.

In his infamous Dresden speech, Höcke had already called for a "180-degree turnaround in remembrance policy" in 2017 and, referring to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, had railed that the Germans were "the only people in the world who have planted a monument of shame in the heart of their capital city."

His 2018 book *Never in the Same River Twice* is a modern version of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. It warns of a "death of the people through population exchange" and calls for the deportation of "culturally alien" people from Germany in a "large-scale remigration project." In doing so, "there will be no getting around a policy of 'well-tempered cruelty.'"

While the supposedly "moderate" sections of the party around co-chairman Jörg Meuthen have in the past tried to keep a certain distance from Höcke, mainly for tactical reasons, his fascist positions have now found their way into the AfD election programme almost word for word.

The adoption of an almost complete "immigration moratorium," for example, can be traced back to Höcke's intervention. After the fascist warned in a diatribe of a "cultural meltdown" in Germany through immigration, the delegates stiffened the party programme. As a result, the right to asylum is to be de facto abolished and asylum seekers turned back at the border as a matter of principle.

The text even mentions the possibility of a border fence "to protect the German borders."

The election manifesto envisages Germany's withdrawal from the European Union, with the aim of "establishing a new European economic and interest community," which was also pushed by the extreme right. "The EU must die if Germany wants to live!" bawled Karsten Hilse, a member of the Bundestag (federal parliament), to the delegates in a variation of the Nazi slogan "Germany must live, even if we must die."

The influence of the "Flügel" also became particularly clear in its pandemic policy. In addition to its election programme, the AfD adopted a so-called Coronavirus Resolution. It calls for an "immediate end to the state-imposed lockdown," criticises masks and tests, raises anti-vaccine sentiments and expresses solidarity with the demonstrations of far-right coronavirus deniers. Höcke himself repeatedly ranted to media representatives about a "pandemic through testing."

The AfD is hated by the vast majority of the population. Current polls put it at 10 percent of the vote, far below its result in the last federal elections four years ago, when it won 12.6 percent. The fascists can only raise their heads so aggressively because they have the support of the ruling class.

All the establishment parties, from the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) to the Left Party, have systematically created the social, ideological and political conditions for the rise of the AfD in recent years, integrating the far-right party into the political system and adopting large parts of its programme themselves.

This can currently be seen in the pandemic. For example, the murderous "profits before lives" policy, which is being implemented by all ruling parties in the federal and state governments, and which has already cost more than 77,000 lives in Germany, bore the AfD's signature from the very beginning.

A year ago, when Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) justified the unsafe return to workplaces and schools

by claiming that the right to life was not “absolutely” protected by the constitution, AfD Honorary Chairman Alexander Gauland agreed with him, saying, “Bundestag President Schäuble is absolutely right here. If the treatment of a disease begins to cause more harm than the disease itself, then this treatment must be stopped.”

With this, he summed up the agenda of the governing parties. The first lockdown was ended to squeeze out of the working class the astronomical sums handed out to the financial oligarchy in the form of the so-called coronavirus emergency measures. To push through the policy of reopening businesses and schools against the will of the vast majority of the population, representatives of all Bundestag parties supported the far-right coronavirus demonstrations demanding the immediate end of all restrictions and social distancing measures.

Currently, the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats (SPD) is discussing a new infection protection law with all parliamentary factions, including the AfD, which further centralises and pushes the reopening policy. Among other things, it stipulates keeping schools open even when infection rates are very high. According to the draft, schools are only to close after an incidence rate of 200 (!) for three consecutive days—and even then not without restrictions.

In many other areas, too, the establishment parties have long been putting the AfD’s programme into practice. They are hermetically sealing off the EU’s external borders, letting thousands of refugees drown in the Mediterranean, building inhumane camps for refugees, carrying out mass deportations, establishing a police state and organising the most comprehensive military buildup since the Nazis.

Just a few days before the start of the AfD party conference, the grand coalition gave the go-ahead for a “Voluntary Military Service in Homeland Security.” It is aimed directly at AfD supporters and other right-wing extremists, who are already forming extensive networks in the Bundeswehr. The new service is also a first step towards the return of general conscription, which the AfD demands in its election manifesto.

In this context, all parties—even the nominally “left” ones—support the goal of rearming Germany and turning it into a veritable war power. This was recently shown by the party congresses of the Greens and the Left Party. In their election manifesto, the Greens advocate massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr (armed forces) and NATO. And the new leadership of the Left Party has also made clear it would support the aggressive foreign policy course in a possible SPD-Left Party-Green federal government.

To suppress growing social and political opposition among workers and youth and to steer it in a reactionary direction,

the “left” bourgeois parties also rely on xenophobia and racism. The latest example is the new book by former Left Party leader Sahra Wagenknecht. In it, she rails against immigrants and systematically belittles fascist forces and the AfD.

At one point, she describes the right-wing extremist demonstrators who stormed the Bundestag steps in Berlin last September waving imperial war flags as “a large number of relatively apolitical, but just discontented ordinary citizens.”

She writes about AfD leader Meuthen, who joined forces with Höcke at the Dresden party conference: “It’s right to resist the beginnings. But anyone who suspects the economic liberal professor at an administrative university, Jörg Meuthen, of wanting to introduce a new fascism in Germany, only ensures that [such] perceptions, even where they are justified, are no longer taken seriously.” In doing so, she adopts the position of the fascists themselves, who denounce and attack anyone who calls them by name and confronts the fascist danger.

There are objective driving forces behind the sharp turn to the right by the Left Party and the entire political establishment. In the final analysis, it involves the same questions that drove all bourgeois parties into the camp of fascism in the 1930s. The ruling class is reacting to the historical crisis of European and international capitalism, the global development of war, growing tensions between the great powers and, above all, the return of the class struggle.

To prevent the ruling class from once again imposing its reactionary policies through fascist methods, it is necessary to build an international, socialist movement that links the struggle against capitalism with the growing opposition to social inequality, militarism and the herd immunity policy of allowing the pandemic to continue. This requires building the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the International Committee of the Fourth International as the new mass revolutionary party of the international working class.



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