

Germany's political establishment and media accuse far-right Alternative for Germany of "lacking patriotism"

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For months, millions have been taking to the streets across Germany to protest against the xenophobic and fascist policies of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Now the editorials, news and talk shows are also focusing intensively on the far-right party; there was even a parliamentary current affairs debate on the subject in the Bundestag last Thursday.

However, unlike the anti-AfD demonstrations, the media and establishment parties are not attacking the AfD from the left, but from the right. After an assistant of the AfD Member of the European Parliament Maximilian Krah was arrested on espionage charges, they exploited links between leading AfD politicians and Russia and China to fuel war hysteria against the two countries. The AfD was accused of a lack of patriotism and enthusiasm for war.

Speaking in the Bundestag, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) deputy Marc Heinrichmann accused the AfD of "betraying and selling out the German people." Social Democratic Party (SPD) deputy Dirk Wiese accused it of "hypocritical love of the fatherland" and the Green Party's Konstantin von Notz of "obsequious fawning towards China and Russia." Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (SPD) said that it was "unacceptable for representatives of the people to become Putin's or Beijing's stooges and an instrument of their propaganda machinery."

The topic dominated the main news on broadcasters ARD and ZDF for days. News weekly *Der Spiegel* appeared at the weekend with the headline, "The traitors to the country." Research had shown "how important the AfD is for Russia's hybrid warfare against the West," wrote the magazine. "While it was part of its brand essence to accuse the hated 'system

parties' of betraying German interests, it now appears that the party has primarily described itself in this way."

This campaign is reactionary in every respect. It will not weaken the extreme right, but rather strengthen it. Having largely adopted the AfD's political programme on refugees and domestic policy, the coalition government comprising the SPD, Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP) is now trying to overtake the party of AfD leaders Gauland, Höcke, Chrupalla and Weidel on the right in terms of foreign policy as well. The accusation that the AfD lacks patriotism is like accusing an alcoholic of not drinking enough schnapps.

The AfD's European party conference in Magdeburg last summer was an orgy of nationalism and great power chauvinism. The guest speaker was the Bulgarian right-wing extremist Kostadin Kostadinov, who received a standing ovation when he shouted: "It is high time that Germany took its rightful place as a great power, and not just in Europe."

Maximilian Krah, who was elected as the lead candidate for the European elections at the Magdeburg party conference and who is now at the centre of the accusations against the AfD, cheered: "We can take courage and passion from our colleague from Bulgaria to get this far."

Krah belongs to the *völkisch* (extreme nationalist) Höcke wing of the AfD and is well connected with the fascist scene in Europe. In his office, he employs the Frenchman Guillaume Pradoura, who was expelled from Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National in 2019 for an anti-Semitic caricature. However, Krah is not being pilloried for his fascist connections and great power fantasies, but for his contacts with Moscow and

Beijing and his reservations about the war in Ukraine.

On April 23, the federal prosecutor general had Krah's colleague Jian G. arrested on the charge of "secret service agent activity in a particularly serious case." Jian G., who came to Dresden from China to study in 2002 and is now a German citizen, has been working for Krah as an assistant in the European Parliament since 2019. He is alleged to have passed on information from the European Parliament to the Chinese secret service, and to have spied on Chinese dissidents in Germany. More details are not presently known.

Krah is also suspected of having received money from Russian sources. Similar allegations had already been made by the Czech secret service at the end of March against the number two on the AfD's European election list, Bundestag member Petr Bystron. Bystron is said to have collected €20,000 via the "Voice of Europe" media portal, behind which the Ukrainian oligarch Viktor Medvedchuk is suspected of standing. Medvedchuk is a friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin and now lives in Russia. Bystron and Krah deny the allegations.

It is undisputed that AfD representatives have spoken out against arms deliveries to Ukraine and rejected sanctions against China. They hold that these conflicts primarily serve US and not German interests. On the other hand, when it comes to German great power interests, rearmament cannot go far enough for them. The AfD is a thoroughly militaristic party with strong support within the military and security apparatus. Its leadership includes several former officers.

The campaign accusing the AfD of "treason" because of its relations with Russia and China is only superficially directed against the far-right party. It is primarily intended to intimidate and brand as potential "traitors" all those who are fundamentally opposed to German militarism and reject both NATO's proxy war against Russia and the genocide of the Palestinians—which the AfD fully supports.

There are also conflicts in political and business spheres about the correct way to deal with China. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's recent trip to China was heavily criticised in part because he avoided an open confrontation with the Chinese leadership.

"There are high-ranking figures in Germany who have a clear, strategic view of China, not least Vice

Chancellor Robert Habeck and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock," commented the US magazine *Foreign Policy*. "But neither was in Beijing. Instead, Scholz took along ministers ... who are in favour of close cooperation with Beijing, as well as a host of industry leaders who promote Sino-German trade and investment."

The criticism of the AfD was accompanied by hysterical warnings of Chinese industrial espionage and Russian sabotage.

In the Bundestag debate, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser confirmed that two people had been arrested in Bayreuth at the same time as Krah's staff in order to prevent Russian sabotage plans, and three in Bad Homburg and Düsseldorf for espionage on behalf of China. She promised a new law to protect critical infrastructure, called on companies to "make themselves more resilient and continue to ramp up protective measures," and threatened "a tough crackdown by a strong constitutional state."

FDP Bundestag deputy Konstantin Kuhle declared that Germany was "the focus of espionage from China because China is first and foremost a systemic rival that is targeting economic, scientific and military expertise from Germany."

This right-wing atmosphere of warmongering, fears of espionage and law-and-order bombast can only lead to the growth of the AfD and other radical right-wing forces. As the WSWS wrote in January, the AfD is "not a foreign body in an otherwise healthy organism, but the worst symptom of a thoroughly sick system." The far right is used and promoted throughout Europe to suppress resistance to war, militarism and social cuts.

Only an independent movement of the international working class that combines the struggle against militarism, social inequality and dictatorship with the struggle for a socialist society can prevent this. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and its candidates in the European elections stand for.



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