

After the far-right AfD's election success, Social Democrats and Christian Democrats intensify their anti-refugee agitation

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In the run-up to recent state elections in Saxony and Thuringia, the establishment parties paved the way for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) by outdoing them from the right on their core issue: scapegoating refugees and immigrants. After the AfD's electoral success, becoming the second-strongest and strongest party in those states, respectively, they are accelerating this course. One leading politician after another is claiming that the AfD succeeded because they themselves have not been hard enough on refugees.

Federal Finance Minister Christian Lindner, whose Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) failed to clear the 5 percent hurdle for parliamentary representation in those states, announced on all social networks: "There should be no taboos in asylum and immigration policy! That is my lesson from the election in Saxony and Thuringia. People have felt that democracy, the political system, is not solving their problems, and one problem that is at the top of the list is controlling immigration to Germany."

Christian Democratic Union (CDU) leader Friedrich Merz called for the declaration of a "national emergency" in order to override EU law and turn away all refugees at the German border, without allowing them to apply for asylum. "The order of our country is at risk," Merz declared. "We must have the right to reject."

Markus Söder, leader of the CDU's Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), called for the right of asylum to be largely removed from the constitution.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) boasted that his government had already drastically tightened immigration policy and, two days before the elections, carried out the first deportation flight to Afghanistan, where the fundamentalist Taliban rules. "We've done it," he bragged. This was a "sign that we

are working on our promises." If things went "super well," he said, they would agree on further anti-immigrant measures with the CDU.

On Tuesday, a migration summit took place at the Federal Interior Ministry to discuss "tough action to push back irregular migration," according to Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (SPD). In addition to representatives from the federal and state governments, party representatives from the CDU and CSU also took part. The talks were open and constructive, Faeser announced afterwards. Now, certain points that were discussed confidentially would be legally reviewed and then discussed further, she said.

For the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), a split-off from the Left Party, none of this goes far enough. "A sham summit that will not reduce the number of refugees is looming," said Wagenknecht to *Die Welt*. "Instead of pseudo-solutions, we need an end to uncontrolled migration." Refugees entering from "safe third countries" and rejected asylum seekers should have all their benefits cancelled, according to Wagenknecht.

The claim that the AfD is gaining influence because the government is not taking rigorous enough action against refugees is a blatant lie. The opposite is true. It is obvious that the round-the-clock propaganda about "criminal refugees," "illegal foreigners," rigorous border controls, mass deportations and a "strong state" is not weakening the AfD, but strengthening it. And that this is intentional.

The claim that people have nothing against refugees, but that the municipalities are "overwhelmed" by the large number is also false. The municipalities are "overwhelmed" because the federal government is systematically cutting the funds that would be necessary for the humane care and integration of refugees, and investing this money instead in armaments and support

for war.

According to its own figures, the German government has provided €34 billion in support of the war in Ukraine alone. In addition, €72 billion will be spent this year on rearming the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) to make Germany “war-ready” again, in the words of the SPD defence minister. These funds are at the expense of funding for education, healthcare, social spending, the construction of affordable housing and environmental protection.

The government is pursuing imperialist goals with the war in Ukraine: economic control over Ukraine and the subjugation of Russia with its vast mineral resources. That is why Berlin wants to prevent a ceasefire at all costs. To this end, it is willing to accept a massive social catastrophe. Almost half of the refugees currently living in Germany—1.2 million out of 2.6 million—have fled from this war.

The SPD, CDU, FDP, BSW and all the other parties are agitating against refugees not to weaken the AfD, but to strengthen it and help its right-wing, fascist policies to gain ground. They are scapegoating refugees for the social crisis in order to divide the working class and build up a police state.

The real targets of this reactionary campaign are the democratic rights and social gains of the working class and youth. The incitement of a pogrom atmosphere against migrants and the construction of a police state, with surveillance and control powers constantly being expanded, serve to poison the social climate and to suppress the resistance against mass layoffs, falling real wages and social cuts, as well as the opposition to militarism and war.

War, rearmament and massive social inequality are incompatible with democracy. They require—as in 1933, when Reich President Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler as chancellor—the establishment of a dictatorship.

The attack on migrants is serving as a lever for the ruling class in all imperialist countries to shift official policy to the right. In the US, Donald Trump and the Republicans are whipping up a fascistic anti-immigrant atmosphere. They claim that President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris’s supposed “open borders” policy will result in millions of “illegal aliens” and “non-citizens” voting in the November presidential election. The Democrats are doing nothing to counter this campaign, but are themselves intensifying attacks on refugees.

The current anti-refugee hysteria in Germany can only

be understood in the context of the impending jobs massacre. The crisis at VW, where for the first time management wants to close entire plants and will no longer cushion mass layoffs with a waiver of compulsory redundancies, is just the tip of the iceberg.

On Thursday, the *Financial Times* reported under the headline “Germany faces jobs crisis of a thousand cuts” that hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs are at risk. In the automotive industry, with its 780,000 employees, but also in the chemical industry, with 480,000 employees, as well as in many other sectors, hardly any jobs are safe.

Until now, the corporations have always relied on the trade unions to cut jobs and wages without meeting any major resistance. But now they fear that the well-paid officials will lose control. That is why they are increasingly turning to dictatorship and fascism.

The fight against layoffs, war and fascism requires breaking with all the establishment parties and developing a new political perspective. As the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) wrote in its statement “Defend refugees and democratic rights!” this requires a socialist programme that defends the social and democratic interests of all workers:

Workers who come from Germany and immigrants are not rivals for scarce housing, jobs and income. They must unite to reverse the decades-long regressive redistribution that has concentrated billions in the hands of a few dozen individuals. The enormous sums that flow into war, armament, hand-outs for the banks and corporations, and rising stock prices must be used to finance education, healthcare, climate protection, safe and well-paid jobs and affordable housing.

The SGP and its international sister organisations in the International Committee of the Fourth International are fighting for this perspective.



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