

In federal election, Germany's four main parties all incite anti-refugee hatred and call for greater military spending and war

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The entire campaign for Germany's federal election has been a repulsive spectacle. All the parties in the Bundestag (parliament) are competing with each other in inciting anti-refugee hatred, calling for more German and European rearmament spending and currying favour with the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD).

This characterised the so-called "Quad" debate of the four leading candidates to be the next chancellor, broadcast across several channels on Sunday evening. In addition to the incumbent Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrat, SPD), his challengers Friedrich Merz (Christian Democrat, CDU/CSU), Robert Habeck (Greens) and Alice Weidel (AfD) took part in the live discussion.

The debate began with a foul tirade against refugees in which all four participants and the moderators participated. When asked, Scholz stated that he stood by his statement from last autumn in leading news weekly *Der Spiegel* that he finally wanted "to deport on a large scale."

This was "about us doing everything we can to limit irregular migration," he said. That was why it had already been "reduced by 100,000 last year" and there would be "another reduction of 100,000 this year." Also, Scholz said, "as far as deportations are concerned, there has been an increase of 70 percent since I took office." And of course, this "is not enough and must continue."

In response to Merz's criticism that the federal government was being too lax and was "the only one in all of Europe still bringing refugees from Afghanistan to Germany," Scholz and Habeck boasted that they had recently "organised a deportation flight to Afghanistan," promising that "further flights will be organised."

Weidel, for her part, announced that the AfD would stop "illegal immigration... by securing our borders and consistently deporting criminals and illegals in this country." She essentially just reiterated what Scholz, Merz and Habeck had also stated. Significantly, the moderator Pina Atalay commented on Weidel's statements by saying that this was

"not so different from the others."

The anti-refugee agitation and associated strengthening and integration of the fascists into government and state serves two central goals: to divide the working class and to establish a police state in order to rebuild Germany into a leading military power and make it "fit for war," as SPD defence minister Boris Pistorius said, after losing two world wars.

The open fracturing of transatlantic relations at the Munich Security Conference and the latest US threats to bypass Europe in the plundering of Ukraine, as Washington seeks to negotiate directly with Putin, are taking this development to the extreme. The ruling class in Germany is reacting to this with a veritable frenzy of massive military spending and warmongering.

Habeck, who had previously called for a tripling of regular military spending to 3.5 percent of GDP (almost €150 billion), was particularly aggressive. "Germany, the next federal government, no matter who is in it, must place itself at the service of European strength so that we can stand firm," he warned. "What is at stake here is defending what has been built up in recent decades," he said and we must "under no circumstances prostrate ourselves before America, faced with these announcements." Otherwise, we would give up "what makes us strong and what defines us."

Habeck's main concern is not Trump's fascist agenda or that of the AfD, but rather that NATO's war offensive against Russia continue unabated—even if this brings with it the danger of a nuclear escalation. He accused Weidel and the AfD of "submitting" to Putin, adding aggressively: "Greetings to Moscow, love to Moscow."

Scholz was just as belligerent as Habeck. When asked whether Germany and the Europeans had, with the direct talks between the US and Russia, now "finally ended up at the side table of world politics," the Chancellor replied: "As Europeans, we will not allow" decisions to be made over Ukraine's head. "We will also not allow anyone to agree,

for example, that Ukraine will be demilitarised.” On the contrary, Kiev needed a very strong army so that the country would not be invaded again once a peace agreement was reached.

In reality, neither US nor European policy has anything to do with “peace.” By encircling Russia, the NATO powers initially provoked the reactionary invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine almost three years ago. And now, the growing conflicts between Washington, on the one hand and Brussels and Berlin, on the other, show that the imperialist powers were never concerned with “freedom” or even “democracy,” but with geopolitical power and control of raw materials.

Trump’s demand that Kiev hand over half of its rare earth, lithium and titanium deposits to the US in return for support worth \$500 billion has provoked an angry response from the European powers, led by Berlin. They want to grab Ukraine’s enormous raw material deposits—and Russia’s even larger ones—for themselves and are willing to continue the war effort to get them.

“More support for Ukraine has been provided from Europe than from the US,” Scholz emphasised. Germany alone had “raised €44 billion in support, including the costs for Ukrainian refugees” and “provided, pledged or delivered €28 billion in military aid,” continuing that “we continue to provide comprehensive support to Ukraine.”

Merz, who like Habeck has already announced his intention as chancellor to supply Kiev with long-range Taurus cruise missiles capable of reaching Moscow, left no doubt that German imperialism was preparing for war against Russia once again. One could “firmly assume” that Putin “will not shy away from crossing the borders even further.” He had “NATO territory in his sights. And we must be prepared for that.”

This turns reality on its head. In fact, it is the ruling class in Germany, which, despite its barbaric crimes in the 20th century, is once again “crossing borders,” pushing eastwards and lashing out wildly in the process. Merz accused Scholz of not increasing the military budget quickly enough and of letting the proposal of Defence Minister Pistorius “to rebuild compulsory military service bit by bit simply fizzle out.”

Scholz replied, it was his government that “contributed to the fact that we are now spending more on the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces].” When he became finance minister in 2018, under Chancellor Merkel (CDU), it was still €37 billion and “now it is €80 billion. And if you add the other NATO expenses, it’s €90 billion.” And of course it had to continue like this, he said. If you wanted to spend even more on defence than 2 percent of GDP in the long term, you had to find a way to finance it.

The claims by Scholz and Habeck that unlike Merz, they would not finance the massive rearmament spending “at the

expense of rail infrastructure, roads, health, pensions and care” (Scholz) are just election bluster. Under the Schröder-Fischer government (1998-2005), the SPD and Greens organised the biggest regressive social redistribution of wealth since the end of the Second World War. The welfare cuts and loosening of labour protections in the “Hartz” laws plunged millions of workers and their families into poverty and this has been further intensified in recent years. With the planned rearmament spending, there will be nothing left of the remaining social and democratic rights.

At its election rally on Saturday, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) warned of this development, counterposing the unity of the international working class and a socialist programme to the warmongers. The SGP “is contesting the federal elections to oppose the all-party coalition advocating war and austerity. Together with our sister parties of the Fourth International around the world, we are building an international movement to halt the madness of war, mass layoffs and wage cuts,” reads the SGP election statement. And further:

We counterpose the European Union of banks and corporations, of mass death and war, with the perspective of a Socialist United States of Europe—the unity of the European working class to break the power of the banks and corporations. Instead of fighting one another, we call on Russian and Ukrainian workers to unite against the warmongers in their respective countries.

- Against the EU of banks and corporations, of mass death and war! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

- Defend democratic rights!

- Equal rights for migrants and refugees!



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