

Social Democrats, Left Party, unions responsible for far-right Alternative for Germany's record election result

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The Alternative for Germany's (AfD) electoral victory in Saxony-Anhalt is a damning verdict on the Social Democrats (SPD), the Left Party and the trade unions. The far-right party, which trivialises the Nazi regime, stirs up hatred against migrants, seeks to ideologically co-opt culture and education, and aims to establish a police state, secured 44.2 percent of the vote. This was achieved on a record turnout of 78 percent.

The Nazis achieved a better result in a state election on only two occasions before Hitler's coming to power in January 1933—in May 1932 in Oldenburg, with 48.4 percent, and June 1932 in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, with 49 percent. In Anhalt (part of what is now Saxony-Anhalt), the Nazis secured 40.7 percent in April 1932 and formed one of the first Nazi-led state governments. In the Reichstag election in November 1932, the last before Hitler's appointment as chancellor, the Nazis received 33.1 percent. Since the end of the Third Reich, no far-right party has ever again achieved a comparably high election result.

This result does not mean that every AfD voter is a Nazi. The AfD is not a fascist mass party. It is a product of the shift to the right across the entire bourgeois political spectrum and owes its rise to the degeneration of the trade unions and the parties that once claimed to represent the interests of the workers. They have betrayed the workers so often and so thoroughly that the AfD has been able to capitalise on the outrage and frustration this has caused.

In eastern Germany, the SPD has already played a leading role in three brutal rounds of social cutbacks: in the 1990s, when the industry of the former East Germany was largely dismantled; in the 2000s with

Agenda 2010; and now with the “reform” of the pension, social welfare and health insurance systems. As Federal Minister of Finance, SPD leader Lars Klingbeil is orchestrating the dismantling of the welfare state, while Boris Pistorius, as Minister of Defence, is responsible for the largest military build-up since Hitler.

The Left Party is playing a particularly insidious role in this betrayal. It talks left but acts like a right-wing party. It criticises the policies of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and SPD in its Sunday speeches, but supports them when it really matters. In state governments, it participates directly in the dismantling of the welfare state. In Saxony-Anhalt, the Left Party already committed itself before the election to supporting a CDU-led government against the AfD.

Just three days before the election, IG Metall demonstrated once again that the trade unions have completely transformed themselves into the lackeys of big business. In a cloak-and-dagger operation, it approved the elimination of a further 50,000 jobs at Volkswagen.

The SPD, the Left Party, the Greens and the trade unions support NATO's war against Russia, the genocide against the Palestinians in the Middle East and the EU's refugee policy, which is no different from that of the AfD.

The AfD systematically exploited this in its election campaign. It spoke out against arms deliveries to Ukraine, warned that the escalation of the war against Russia would bring the conflict to Germany, and promised economic recovery and social benefits. It combined this with “law and order” slogans and hate speech against migrants.

The united front formed by all the other parties has further strengthened the AfD. The high turnout, which was almost 20 percent higher than in the last election, worked in its favour. It received significantly more votes than the opinion polls had predicted. Many of the AfD's votes came from the ranks of non-voters, who had already rejected the entire political establishment in previous elections.

The CDU is deeply despised. It was the main loser in Sunday's election. It lost more than half of its share of the vote, falling from 37.1 percent to 17.4 percent. This was due less to the CDU's lead candidate, the incumbent Minister-President Sven Schulze, than to Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who is more unpopular than any chancellor before him.

While the CDU suffered heavy losses, the SPD, the Left Party and the Greens gained hardly any votes. They all hovered around 9 percent. The Left Party lost two percentage points, the SPD gained half a percentage point and the Greens gained three percentage points. The FDP, which was part of the previous state government, lost 4 percentage points and, with 2.5 percent, was voted out of the state parliament.

The Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), which split from the Left Party, managed to secure seats in the state parliament by the narrowest of margins. It already pledged partial cooperation with the AfD before the election.

There is a deadlock in the new state parliament. The AfD is three seats short of being able to form a government on its own. The CDU, the Greens, the SPD and the Left Party, taken together, are also three seats short of a majority. Furthermore, a resolution on incompatibility passed by the federal party prohibits the CDU from cooperating directly with the Left Party. The BSW, with its five seats, could tip the balance, but it rejects the election of a CDU Minister-President and, so far, has also ruled out a coalition with the AfD.

The deadlock could last for months, as Schulze remains Minister-President until a successor is elected, and the constitution sets no timeframe for this. However, it is also possible that the CDU or the BSW might reach an agreement with the AfD, or that individual CDU deputies might switch parties. There is support for this within sections of the CDU, and the AfD appears to be banking on such a development. In

substantive terms, there would be nothing to prevent this.

The coming weeks and months will be marked by fierce political crises—not only in Saxony-Anhalt. These will further strengthen the AfD unless the working class intervenes independently. As the Socialist Equality Party wrote on Saturday in its statement “The fight against the Alternative for Germany demands a fight against capitalism”:

This lurch to the right cannot be halted by parliamentary manoeuvres involving the governing parties. What is needed is an independent offensive by the working class, directed against war, social spending cuts and their root cause, capitalism. Such an offensive would deprive the AfD of the social ground on which it currently spreads its demagoguery, and would lay bare the class divisions: the AfD does not represent the interests of ordinary people, but stands on the side of capital, militarism and the authoritarian state.



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