

The way forward following the Alternative for Germany's electoral victory

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The Alternative for Germany's (AfD) election victory in the German state of Saxony-Anhalt has sparked shock and horror internationally—while at the same time drawing enthusiastic support from far-right forces and sections of the international oligarchy.

The AfD increased its share of the vote from 20.8 percent in 2021 to 43.8 percent, becoming by far the strongest party. It won 38 of the 41 direct mandates and now holds 39 of the 83 seats in the new state parliament—just three seats short of an absolute majority. The Christian Democrats (CDU), the party currently in power at the federal level, which has governed Saxony-Anhalt since 2011 and as recently as 2021 had achieved 37.1 percent, plummeted to 17.2 percent.

The other established parties also suffered a debacle. The Social Democrats (SPD), which governs in a coalition with the CDU/Christian Social Union at the federal level, secured 9.3 percent; the Greens 8.9 percent; and the Left Party 8.6 percent. The Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), contesting a state election for the first time, narrowly secured a place in the state parliament with 5.3 percent. The CDU, SPD and Greens, who previously governed together, now account for a combined total of just 35.4 percent—more than eight percentage points less than the AfD alone.

While the AfD is not a mass fascist party, its ethno-nationalist ideology, racist worldview and political programme are closely linked to the Nazi tradition. Its rise is an indictment of the entire capitalist system. It cannot be understood as a purely German phenomenon or as a peculiarity of a small East German federal state with 1.7 million eligible voters. The AfD's electoral success is part of an international shift to the right among the ruling elites.

The world stands at a historic turning point. Nowhere else in the world has fascism so openly demonstrated the abhorrent crimes of which it is capable as in Germany.

The systematic murder of 6 million Jews, the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union with at least 27 million fatalities, the crushing of the labour movement and the establishment of a regime of terror by the Nazis are still regarded today as the epitome of the crimes against humanity.

The intensification of war, economic crisis and social polarisation no longer allow for social compromise or democracy. That is why the ruling class in all the leading capitalist countries is turning to fascist methods of rule. Donald Trump's presidency in the US, Marine Le Pen's status as frontrunner in the French presidential election, Giorgia Meloni's government in Italy and the growing influence of Vox in Spain are all expressions of the same trend.

No one should be taken in by the talk of a "firewall" against the AfD. The established parties have paved the way for the AfD and will cooperate with it. They have laid the political and ideological ground on which the AfD thrives.

Historians such as Jörg Baberowski have been rewriting the history of the Second World War for years and trivialising the crimes of the Nazis. In Ukraine, the German government is funding a regime that venerates Nazi collaborators as heroes, whose hands are stained with the blood of tens of thousands of Jews, communists and Poles. In Gaza, it is supporting a genocide. The EU has turned Europe into a fortress on whose walls thousands of refugees die every year, thereby putting the AfD's policies into practice.

The trade unions, the SPD and the Left Party bear the main responsibility for the rise of the AfD. They systematically prevent resistance to war and social inequality from finding expression on the left. They support layoffs, cuts to social services and a policy of war, and stifle any resistance to these measures. In this way, they enable the AfD to present itself as an opponent

of the political establishment and as an anti-war party.

Just three days before the Saxony-Anhalt election, IG Metall once again demonstrated that the trade unions serve the interests of the corporations, not those of the workers. It agreed, behind the workers' backs, to the loss of 75,000 jobs at Volkswagen.

The SPD has long since severed all ties with its roots in the labour movement and, in the Merz government, is responsible for rearmament and cuts to social services through its control of the Ministries of Defence, Finance and Labour.

The Left Party and its predecessor, the Party of Democratic Socialism, have played a key role in destroying jobs and public services for the past 35 years in eastern Germany, where they were at times the strongest party.

The AfD has exploited this to its advantage. The exit polls refute the notion that 44 percent of the population of Saxony-Anhalt have suddenly turned into staunch right-wing extremists. In addition to the traditional right-wing issues of internal security and immigration, social welfare, the economy and peace played a decisive role in the decision to vote for the AfD. According to surveys by Infratest dimap, 20 percent of AfD voters hold far-right views and a further 18 percent have a distinctly right-wing worldview. For 62 percent, however, this is not the case. Many voted for the party in protest against the federal government's policies of war and austerity.

In reality, of course, the AfD is neither against war nor against social spending cuts. It was the first party to call for an increase in defence spending to 5 percent of GDP and demands strict adherence to the debt brake. Capitalist private property and profit are sacred to it. It represents the interests of capital in the most aggressive form. The congratulations from Donald Trump and Elon Musk on its election victory in Saxony-Anhalt speak louder than any election slogans. The AfD's economic nationalism serves to enforce the interests of the oligarchs and monopolies—as under Hitler—by means of war.

Under the pressure of American tariffs, Chinese competition, rising defence spending and skyrocketing budget deficits, the crisis of European capitalism is intensifying by the day. The complete dismantling of the pension, healthcare and education systems—which workers fought for in the great class struggles of the post-war decades—is becoming inevitable for the capitalists if they are to defend their wealth and profits.

The same applies to the escalation of the war in Ukraine. German imperialism, in particular, regards a

Russian defeat as crucial to satisfying its hunger for raw materials and expansion and is willing to risk a nuclear war in the process.

To push through this agenda, the ruling class is courting the fascists. The working class must provide its own response and build an independent political leadership. The Socialist Equality Party stated in its statement ahead of the election:

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.

The objective conditions for such an offensive are developing rapidly. Resistance to the German government's policies of war and austerity is growing. What is lacking is an independent socialist perspective and leadership. The struggle against the AfD requires a political break with the Left Party and the trade unions, which are endeavouring to chain the working class to the rotting corpse of dying capitalism.

The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) is standing in the Berlin House of Representatives elections on September 20 to build such a movement. It does not make hollow appeals to the warmongers but organises resistance against redundancies, pay cuts and social spending cuts and, together with its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International, is building a worldwide movement against war and capitalism.



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