

Far-right AfD politician elected state parliament president in Saxony-Anhalt, a first since the Nazi era

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On Tuesday, for the first time since the end of the Nazi dictatorship, a deputy of a far-right party was elected president of the Saxony-Anhalt Landtag (state parliament), with Tobias Rausch taking the post. The election shows how ever larger sections of the ruling class are relying on the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to push through the hated policies of war and cuts against the population with the utmost brutality.

Despite winning 43.8 percent of the vote in the elections four weeks ago, the AfD does not command a majority in the state parliament. It was dependent on the votes of the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), a split-off from Die Linke (Left Party), which had already announced that it would support Rausch and is now celebrating the end of the “firewall,” the supposed refusal of the established parties to collaborate with the AfD.

However, Rausch’s 48 votes came not only from these two parliamentary groups; at least four more votes came from other parties. There were also five abstentions. This is particularly significant with a view to the election of the State Premier in December. If Ulrich Siegmund were to receive the same number of votes, he could become the first AfD state premier. The AfD had already announced that there were defectors within the CDU.

Rausch is a close confidant of Siegmund. He joined the AfD as early as 2013 and most recently served as parliamentary business manager of its state parliamentary group. Although he likes to present himself as pragmatic, he has fully backed the state branch’s openly ethno-nationalist (*völkisch*) course. In the state parliament, he rails against “left-green eco-madness” and against “establishment parties” that “open up the welfare systems to millions of foreigners.” He has also demanded “special classes” for Ukrainian pupils in order to “prepare the refugee children as well as possible for their return.”

As state parliament president, he now holds one of the highest-ranking offices in Saxony-Anhalt. He represents the

parliament externally, has authority over the state parliament administration, and holds both domestic authority over the premises and police powers in the parliament building. He could have unwelcome art removed from the premises and pursue right-wing cultural patronage.

Rausch’s election marks a turning point. In the country where the Nazis committed the worst crimes in human history, the ruling class is once again relying on fascist forces. The events in Saxony-Anhalt are merely the latest step in the systematic normalisation of the AfD by the entire political establishment. Daniel Rausch himself was already elected the first AfD vice-president of the state parliament in 2016. In the Bundestag, the federal parliament, the far-right party is represented on numerous committees, and in Saxony it is even being integrated into the work of government.

In Heidenau in Saxony, the CDU and the AfD have just jointly agreed that no more *Stolpersteine* (“stumbling stones,” small brass plaques set into pavements) may be laid in memory of Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Instead, all victims of violence are to be commemorated equally at a single central site—including soldiers from Hitler’s Wehrmacht!

This is not a purely German phenomenon. Far-right forces are being built up and strengthened everywhere to push through the policies of war, mass redundancies and social attacks against growing resistance: Trump in the US, Bolsonaro in Brazil and Le Pen in France. In Spain, Prime Minister Sánchez has responded to the mass protests against the housing emergency by calling new elections, in which the neo-fascist Vox is hoping for massive gains.

It is highly significant that it is the Alliance for Social Justice and Economic Reason, as the BSW is now formally called, that has become the most important enabler of the far right. The BSW split from Die Linke in 2024, and most of its leading personnel previously belonged to that party.

BSW parliamentary group leader Thomas Schulze defended Rausch’s election on the public broadcaster MDR,

arguing not only that the AfD was the largest group, but also that Rausch had behaved very constructively in talks with his party on specialist issues. Party icon Sahra Wagenknecht had already celebrated before the election, saying, “The BSW is ending the firewall idiocy!”

BSW functionaries have not carried out a 180-degree turn; rather, they are taking the policies of Die Linke to their logical conclusion. Die Linke itself is adopting the positions of the far right ever more openly. In the Bundesrat, Germany’s second chamber of parliament, it voted for the massive rearmament programme, which during the election campaign only the AfD had called for. At the state level, it is implementing a brutal deportation regime and building up the state’s repressive apparatus.

In the Bundestag, Die Linke works together with the AfD on various committees, and its only State Premier to date, Bodo Ramelow, boasted as far back as 2020 that his vote had helped elect AfD deputy Michael Kaufmann as vice president of the Thuringia state parliament. Die Linke’s Greek sister party, Syriza, even entered a coalition with the far-right party Anel (Independent Greeks) and then, together with it, imposed the worst austerity package in the history of the EU.

The behaviour of all the capitalist parties proves that none of them can be relied upon in the fight against the fascists. Because they defend capitalism, which is once again leading to fascism and war, they themselves are moving even further to the right. The integration of the AfD follows from this policy.

It should be remembered that Hitler, too, did not become Reich Chancellor with a majority of his own. In the last free elections, he received only 33 percent of the vote. Even when Nazi terror was already raging on the streets and the Communist Party (KPD) had been banned, Hitler did not command a majority of his own. Yet all the bourgeois parties voted for the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* (Enabling Act) that handed Hitler absolute power. Faced with the capitalist crisis, the capitalists pushed for a new world war, which they could only carry out by brutally suppressing all opposition.

The same is true again today. One cannot return to the methods of genocide, as in Gaza, and prepare a war against Russia without ultimately using fascist methods to suppress opposition to it.

The AfD is not a foreign body in an otherwise healthy polity but the product of precisely this policy. Its programme does not stand in opposition to that of the establishment parties but drives it to its sharpest conclusion. The increase in the arms budget to 5 percent of gross domestic product, first demanded by the AfD, has long since become the official policy of NATO and the German government. The inhuman agitation against refugees, which brands the

weakest members of society as scapegoats for the social crisis, is the official policy of the European Union. And the construction of a police and surveillance state, as advocated by the AfD, is advancing rapidly under the coalition government of Merz (CDU) and Klingbeil (SPD).

But there are also important differences from the 1930s. The AfD has no mass base but relies above all on anger over the other parties’ war policy. The working class has not been through defeats; it has not even begun to fight. Leon Trotsky once described fascism as the “party of despair” and socialism as the “party of hope.” A vigorous struggle by the working class would give hope to many of those who are now voting for the AfD out of protest and despair and would change the political situation.

The decisive task is to move workers to break with all the capitalist parties that have one foot in the camp of the far right, to free them from the paralysing influence of the trade unions and to arm them with a socialist programme. The fight against the AfD can only be waged as a fight against the entire capitalist system. This perspective is advanced by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP). In its election statement for the Berlin state elections, it asserted:

The struggle against the AfD therefore requires a break with all capitalist parties and the independent political mobilisation of the working class on the basis of an international socialist program. It is time to oppose the bankrupt profit system with an egalitarian, democratic and socialist society.



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