

Far-right AfD overtakes parties of Germany's federal government in Bavaria and Hesse state elections

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Record results for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and heavy losses for the parties of the federal coalition government are the main results of state elections held Sunday in Bavaria and Hesse, where almost a quarter of the country's inhabitants live. In Hesse, the AfD gained 5.3 percent and became the second strongest party, with 18.4 percent. In Bavaria, it gained 4.4 percent and ended up in third place, with 14.6 percent.

The result in Bavaria is particularly remarkable because Free Voters, another party to the right of state Prime Minister Markus Söder's Christian Social Union (CSU), also stood in the election. Although it had become known shortly before the poll that its leader, Hubert Aiwanger, had been a neo-Nazi in his youth, Free Voters made significant gains and came second, with 15.8 percent. The two far-right parties now account for more than a third of the members of the Bavarian state parliament.

The growth of the extreme right was at the expense of the governing parties in Berlin—the Social Democrats (SPD), Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens—and the Left Party. In Hesse, the SPD, Greens and FDP together lost 12.2 percentage points, and in Bavaria they lost 6.6 points. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's SPD registered its historically worst result in Bavaria, with 8.4 percent, and was only the fifth strongest party. The FDP was thrown out of the Bavarian state parliament and only just managed to re-enter the Hesse state parliament, with 5 percent. The Greens also lost 3.2 percentage points in Bavaria and 5 points in Hesse.

The Left Party lost more than half of its voters in both states. In Bavaria, where it has never managed to clear the 5 percent hurdle to enter the state parliament, it

came in at 1.7 percent, and in Hesse at 3.1 percent. Thus, for the first time in 15 years, the Left Party is no longer represented in the Hesse state parliament in Wiesbaden.

The election result will not immediately change the composition of the two state governments. In Bavaria, where Prime Minister Söder had already committed to a continuation of the coalition with Free Voters before the election, the CSU, with 37 percent, remained just below its result in 2018, and, together with Free Voters, has a majority. In Hesse, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which won a significant 34.6 percent, can continue its current coalition with the much-weakened Greens or govern in an alliance with the SPD. Both parties received around 15 percent.

The results of the two state elections are a serious political warning. The AfD, a party that more and more openly acknowledges the legacy of the Nazis, has for the first time reached almost 20 percent of the vote in a large western German federal state. In the eastern German states of Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg, where state elections will be held next year, the AfD is now in first place in the polls, with over 30 percent.

The rise of the fascists is the direct result of the policies of the federal coalition government and all parties represented in the Bundestag (federal parliament). With their proxy war against Russia, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian lives, they are tying in directly with Germany's aims in the Second World War. Scholz's angry diatribes against Russia before the United Nations are reminiscent of Hitler's speeches.

The return of German militarism goes hand in hand with the government's open rehabilitation of the Nazis.

Nine years ago, all Bundestag parties defended far-right Professor Jörg Baberowski, who asserted that Hitler was “not vicious,” against the criticism of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party). In Kiev, they worked with neo-Nazis to overthrow the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014.

In Ukraine, they are arming a regime in the war against Russia that glorifies mass murderers and Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera. The homage paid last month to Ukrainian Waffen SS veteran Yaroslav Hunka in the Canadian parliament, in which German ambassador Sabine Sparwasser participated, was only the latest link in this chain.

The German government’s massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr (armed forces) was applauded from the start by the AfD, which repeatedly stated that its military policy was finally being put into practice.

This pro-war policy is accompanied by unprecedented social cuts. The federal coalition is cutting billions in social budgets to finance rearmament, pumping billions more into the economy to drive up profits, and passing the costs onto the working class with wage settlements far below the rate of inflation. The consequences are rising poverty alongside a growth in the number of billionaires.

But the AfD is not simply the collateral damage of these right-wing policies. For years, the party has been integrated into parliamentary work by all of the establishment parties, courted by the media, and built up by financially strong backers. It is deliberately promoted, and the fascistic dregs of society are deliberately mobilised to suppress the enormous opposition to militarism and social attacks.

From the Left Party to the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union), all the establishment parties have engaged in unprecedented refugee-baiting in these elections to achieve just that aim. In the best right-wing manner, the catastrophic results of government policy—inflation, unaffordable rents, crumbling infrastructure and growing poverty—are blamed on the weakest in society. As the Jews were once scapegoated by the Nazis, poor refugees seeking protection and safety in Germany are made the scapegoats for all social ills.

Federal Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, the SPD’s top candidate in Hesse, stood out in this regard. She

scored 15.1 percent, the worst result in her former stronghold of Hesse, while the AfD overtook her with 18.4 percent.

The fight against the fascist danger must therefore be directed against all those parties that adopt the policies of the extreme right and pave the way for it. It must be based on the independent movement of the working class, combining resistance to fascism, war and social inequality with the struggle for a socialist society. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei is fighting for.



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