

Far-right Alternative for Germany achieves over 30 percent in Saxony and Thuringia state elections

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For the first time since the end of the Nazi dictatorship, a far-right party has become the strongest force in a German state election. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) received almost a third of the votes cast on Sunday in Thuringia, just under 10 percent ahead of the Christian Democrats (CDU), the second-strongest party. In Saxony, the AfD also achieved over 30 percent and was a close second behind the CDU.

The AfD is led in Thuringia by Björn Höcke, who according to a court order may be called a fascist and was convicted of using prohibited Nazi slogans. Ten years ago, the history teacher moved from West German Hesse to East German Thuringia to found the state association of the AfD there. The top candidate in Saxony, Jörg Urban, is also part of the Höcke wing of the party.

However, the AfD's electoral success has less to do with the wannabe Hitler Björn Höcke than with the shift to the right of all the established parties. They foment xenophobia and nationalism to direct explosive social tensions into right-wing channels, mobilize support for their criminal wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and crush the democratic and social rights of the working class.

Immediately before the elections, after an attack in Solingen carried out by someone with a suspected Islamist background, their xenophobic campaign reached a new peak. Politicians from all parties outbid each other with far-right demands for more deportations, tougher asylum laws and more powers for the police. This enabled the AfD to increase its share of the vote despite a record voter turnout of 74 percent.

Above all, the anti-worker and militarist policies of the supposedly "left" parties and the systematic

suppression of the class struggle by the trade unions in the name of social partnership enable the right-wing demagogues to exploit social outrage, fears over living standards, hatred of the arrogance of the ruling elite and even opposition to war for their reactionary ends.

The Ukraine war, which is rejected by the vast majority of the population, played a central role in the election campaign. The AfD postured as a "peace party," although it advocated more rearmament, the reintroduction of conscription and the immediate restoration of "Germany's defensive capacity." It rejects the NATO offensive against Russia only because it wants to free German imperialism from military dependence on the US so that it can pursue its geostrategic interests more independently.

The three parties that form the federal government in Berlin, as well as the Left Party, experienced an electoral debacle. While the SPD was able to hold on to its miserable result of around 7 percent from the last state election, the Greens in Thuringia failed to surpass the 5 percent hurdle necessary for representation in the state parliament. In Saxony, the Greens barely managed to secure representation. With 1 percent, the Free Democrats sank into insignificance.

The collapse of the Left Party was even more drastic. In Saxony, it missed the five percent hurdle and thus failed to enter the state parliament for the first time in an eastern German state. In Thuringia, where the Left Party has headed the government with Minister President Bodo Ramelow for ten years, the party fell from 31 to 13 percent. This was the price the party paid for Ramelow's right-wing politics, including the systematic deportation of refugees, the implementation of social cuts and even calling for the deployment of

German soldiers to Ukraine.

With typical cynicism, Ramelow described the election as a “holiday of democracy” after the first forecasts became known, because more voters than ever participated in the vote. He promised that he would now “do everything” to help Mario Voigt of the CDU form a government. Ramelow thus backs the CDU of Friedrich Merz, which is competing with the AfD and the federal coalition government over the most right-wing policies.

The highest vote gains were recorded by the Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW), a split-off of the Left Party, which received 16 percent of the vote in Thuringia and 12 percent in Saxony at its first state election performance.

As we have explained, the BSW is not an alternative to the governing parties and the AfD. It combines anti-refugee agitation and state rearmament with the rejection of the Ukraine war and social demagoguery. After the polls closed, Wagenknecht, the Saxon leading candidate Sabine Zimmermann and the Thuringian Katja Wolf confirmed their willingness to enter into coalition negotiations with the CDU and the other established parties. Although they ruled out for the time being a government alliance with the AfD, they left open the possibility of cooperation with the far-right party on a case-by-case basis.

The growth of the AfD is particularly pronounced in eastern Germany, in the territory of the former GDR (East Germany). This is due to the bitter experiences that have been made here with all established parties.

This began with the industrial devastation after German unification, which eliminated 8,000 companies and millions of jobs, continued with the Agenda 2010 of the federal government of the SPD and Greens, which turned eastern Germany into a huge testing platform for low-wage work, and culminated in the economic consequences of the sanctions on Russia.

The social conditions driving support for the far-right AfD are plain for all to see. Even 34 years after German unification, the standard of living in the East is significantly lower than in the West. Especially in rural areas, ageing, decaying infrastructure, a shortage of doctors and teachers, and abject poverty dominate. Industrial lighthouse projects funded with a lot of state money have repeatedly collapsed. Car factories, chip manufacturers and numerous other plants are now in

danger of drowning in the maelstrom of global economic warfare. In Saxony alone, 14 larger companies experienced a severe crisis, went bankrupt or closed locations last year.

However, the growth of right-wing extremist parties is not limited to eastern Germany. In nationwide surveys, the AfD is between 16 and 19 percent. Similar developments can be found in almost all imperialist countries. Donald Trump in the US, Giorgia Meloni in Italy, Marine Le Pen in France and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands are examples of this.

The reason for the return of fascism and war is the deep crisis of world capitalism. The contrast between the super-rich, who dominate economic life, and the working class has reached a level that can no longer be reconciled with democracy. And the struggle for raw materials, markets and profits drives the imperialist great powers, as in the First and Second World Wars, to the violent redivision of the world.

However, the same crisis also creates the conditions for the socialist revolution. The resistance of the working class and youth against social cuts, layoffs and war is growing worldwide. The crucial task is to arm it with an international, socialist perspective. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is fighting for.



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