

Germany's Christian Democrats unite with far-right AfD against refugees

Peter Schwarz
30 January 2025

Following the electoral victory of US President Donald Trump, the ruling class internationally is shifting sharply to the right. In Germany, the political establishment is abandoning all restraint and inhibitions about rehabilitating fascism.

The Bundestag (parliament) opened its Wednesday session with a commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp and ended it by rolling out the red carpet for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which has systematically downplayed and trivialized the Holocaust.

For the first time in the 75-year post-war history of the German parliament, one of the major parliamentary groups joined forces with fascists to help pass an authoritarian and racist bill.

The Christian Democratic (CDU/CSU) parliamentary group had tabled two motions, "Five points for secure borders and an end to illegal migration," and "In favour of a change of policy in domestic security." CDU faction leader Friedrich Merz, the CDU/CSU's candidate for chancellor in the February federal elections, had previously declared his willingness to pass them in collaboration with the AfD.

The first motion on borders and immigration was adopted in a roll-call vote with 348 votes in favour, 345 against and 10 abstentions. It calls for "permanent border controls with all neighbouring countries," which contradicts current EU law; the abolition of the right of asylum for all those who come to Germany by land; and a "significant increase" in detention places in order to lock up all "persons obliged to leave the country."

The CDU/CSU, Liberal Democrats (FDP) and AfD parliamentary groups voted in favour of the motion, while the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and Left Party voted against it. The BSW (Bund Sarah Wagenknecht), a split-off from the Left Party, abstained.

The second motion, on domestic security policy, was

supported only by the CDU/CSU and was defeated by 190 votes to 509.

After the result on the first motion was announced, the AfD parliamentary group erupted in jubilation. AfD parliamentarian Bernd Baumann spoke of a "truly historic moment." A new era, led by the AfD, was beginning here and now, he said, putting his party on a par with Trump, Giorgia Meloni (Italy), Geert Wilders (the Netherlands), Herbert Kickl (Austria) and other far-right politicians who have recently risen to power.

The entire debate was characterised by security hysteria and racist propaganda against immigrants. It began with a moment of silence for the victims of the attack in Aschaffenburg, where a week ago a mentally ill refugee from Afghanistan killed a small child and a man.

This and three other, very different, attacks that had occurred in Magdeburg, Mannheim and Solingen over the course of the past year were cited as proof that the whole of Germany was in a state of emergency and that refugees seeking protection in Germany posed an acute threat to the entire population that could only be countered by sealing off the borders and carrying out mass deportations.

"What else has to happen in Germany before you agree that this is a threat to public safety and order," Merz shouted, addressing Chancellor Scholz (SPD). After the attacks in Magdeburg and Aschaffenburg, words must be finally followed by actions, he said. Merz justified his cooperation with the xenophobic AfD by citing his "conscience," which he "simply can no longer reconcile" with remaining inactive.

Neither the SPD nor the Greens countered this vile agitation. They attacked Merz for his cooperation with the AfD, which repeatedly led to bitter exchanges. But they did so solely from the standpoint that he could achieve his aims by working with them if he wanted to.

Chancellor Scholz, who opened the debate with a

government statement, described the attack in Aschaffenburg as intolerable: “I’ve had enough, and I’m outraged.” However, the cause was not a lack of laws, he said, but a lack of enforcement in connection with illegal or delinquent migrants. No new laws were needed to ensure domestic security, but rather better enforcement of the existing rules.

Scholz listed the numerous laws and measures by which his government had taken action against refugees. “We are the only country in Europe that has succeeded in deporting criminals to Afghanistan in recent years,” Scholz said. Some measures had gone to the limits of what the German constitution and European law allowed, he stressed.

Not one voice was raised in the Bundestag to defend in principle the democratic rights of immigrants and refugees and oppose the smear campaign. Only outside parliament did human rights organisations and representatives of the Protestant and Catholic churches speak out. In a four-page joint statement, the church leaders expressed their deep dismay at the “timing and tone of the current debate.” It was “likely to defame all migrants living in Germany, fuel prejudices, and, in our opinion, does not contribute to solving the issues that actually exist.”

How can this common stance of all the establishment parties be explained on an issue that has prompted even the otherwise conformist churches to protest?

The attack is only seemingly directed solely against refugees and migrants. They serve as a scapegoat for a social crisis caused by cutbacks, rising prices and tax cuts for the rich, and for which the SPD, the Greens, the CDU/CSU and the FDP, as well as the Left Party, are jointly responsible. The increased police powers and destruction of basic democratic rights, which are justified today as needed to halt the flow of refugees, will be used tomorrow to suppress rebellious workers and young people.

The new government will push through massive social attacks—regardless of the election results. All the establishment parties agree on doubling and tripling military spending. Hundreds of thousands of skilled jobs will be destroyed at VW, Mercedes, their suppliers and other companies.

On the same day that the CDU/CSU joined forces with the AfD, the presidents of the four leading business associations published a joint appeal calling for a U-turn in tax, social and energy policy after the general election. An alliance of some 140 business associations called an

“economic warning” protest. Up to 1,000 small business owners took part in rallies in several cities.

This programme, which presupposes enormous attacks on workers’ incomes and past social gains, requires fascist methods. This is the real reason for ex-BlackRock manager Merz’s rapprochement with the AfD.

Developments in Germany parallel those in the United States. While Trump was still considered an outsider when he won his first election, the richest and most powerful business leaders are now backing him. Elon Musk, the wealthiest man in the world, is tasked by Trump with cutting government spending by a third—in effect slashing a wide array of social spending to zero. It is no coincidence that Musk is one of the most important supporters of AfD leader Alice Weidel.

Musk greeted the election of Trump by publicly giving a “Heil Hitler” salute, and just days later said at a rally of the AfD that Germany should move beyond its “past guilt” for the Holocaust and embrace far-right policies.

Trump is also using his moves against refugees as a lever to build a police state, deploy the military at home and mobilise far-right forces. The Democrats are not resisting this because they represent the same class interests—those of Wall Street and the military.

No one should be impressed by the rhetoric of the SPD and the Greens. Scholz and Habeck are right when they accuse Merz of preparing a government that includes the AfD. But, like the Democrats in the US, they will do everything they can to suppress opposition and preserve “order.” The trade unions will support them in this. They will cooperate with the fascists themselves in parliamentary committees and at the local level.

Resistance against the fascists can come only from the working class. Workers will not allow colleagues and neighbours to be deported, their wages to be decimated, their jobs to be destroyed, education and health to be privatised and pensions and social benefits to be smashed.

To lead this struggle, the working class needs a political perspective and its own party, which unites workers internationally and fights for the overthrow of capitalism. This is why the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is standing in the February 23 federal elections.



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