

What next in the fight against the far-right Alternative for Germany?

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More than 700,000 people have taken to the streets in over a hundred German cities since Friday to protest against the Christian Democrats' co-operation with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in the Bundestag (parliament). In Berlin alone, 250,000 took part in a demonstration on Sunday.

The high turnout, which in many cases exceeded the organisers' expectations tenfold, is an expression of the widespread resistance to the fascistic plague that is spreading in Germany and many other countries. The outrage is not only directed against the tearing down of the so-called "firewall" against working with the AfD by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), but above all against the racist agitation used to marginalise millions of migrants and their family members, divide the working class and poison the social climate.

However, as impressive as the demonstrations were, they have not stopped the political shift to the right but have only made this task more critical.

The CDU vividly demonstrated on Monday that it will not be dissuaded from embracing the AfD, neither by mass protests nor by isolated critical voices within its own ranks. At a federal party conference in Berlin, the 1,001 delegates celebrated CDU leader and chancellor candidate Friedrich Merz with frenetic applause. The "immediate action programme" adopted by the party conference also includes the five points on closing borders and deportation policy that the CDU, its CSU Bavarian sister party and the AfD jointly passed in the Bundestag on January 29.

Merz also wants to put the "Immigration Restriction Act," which failed to pass in the Bundestag on Friday despite support from the CDU/CSU, Liberal Democrats (FDP), AfD and the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), to a vote again because numerous parliamentarians were absent.

However, the shift to the right is not limited to the Christian Democrats, who are determined to continue cooperating with the far right. The Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens represent a much greater obstacle to putting the far right in their place.

Leading representatives of both parties participated in the demonstrations and reaffirmed their adherence to the "firewall" against the AfD. But in terms of policy, they largely agree with the right-wing extremists. They too are fuelling anti-migrant

sentiments and advocating a stricter policy of sealing off borders and deportation. They merely accuse the CDU/CSU of cooperating with the AfD, when they could achieve the same results with them.

The Greens have responded to the mass demonstrations at the weekend by presenting their own 10-point plan to fend off refugees and strengthen the security authorities.

The Greens' candidate for chancellor, Robert Habeck, told *Bild* newspaper, "A broad security offensive is needed in Germany. The terrible murders in Aschaffenburg, Magdeburg, Solingen and Mannheim, as well as other acts of violence, are the latest examples of this. We must increase security in the country for everyone—whether with or without a history of migration."

The measures proposed by the Greens include an "enforcement offensive" with a "focus on Islamists and other extremists." "We must not accept the fact that over 170,000 arrest warrants have not been executed in Germany—over 14,000 of them for violent offences," Habeck declared.

The Federal Police and Federal Criminal Investigation Office should be strengthened in terms of personnel, and "be able and allowed to do more," he said. "Potential threats" should be recognised earlier through initial medical examinations and the networking of federal and state authorities. "All data on dangerous individuals must be available at the click of a mouse," according to the Greens.

This is followed by demands for closer monitoring and the consistent deportation of "non-German dangerous persons," "effective containment of irregular migration at the EU's external borders" and "drastic acceleration of asylum procedures." The AfD could sign up to all of this, too.

Habeck also made it clear that he was prepared to cooperate with Merz even after the mass protests against him: "Such a broad security offensive must be negotiated among democrats. ... My hand was and is outstretched for talks."

SPD General Secretary Matthias Miersch said yesterday that his party had been prepared, right up to the end, to adopt a legislative package before the federal elections together with the CDU/CSU to limit migration. "We could have put together a package," he said, but it would have been necessary to discuss massive constitutional problems in individual points of

the package.

For decades, the SPD has played a pioneering role in abolishing the right to asylum. In October 2023, Chancellor Olaf Scholz appeared on the cover of Germany's leading news magazine *Der Spiegel* with the AfD slogan "We must finally deport on a grand scale." Scholz's coalition with the Greens and FDP made a decisive contribution to the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which ProAsyl describes as a "historic low point for refugee protections in Europe."

In doing so—and through its systematic social cuts, which have driven many desperate people into the arms of the far right—the SPD made a significant contribution to strengthening the AfD, which with a good 20 percent now stands in second place behind the CDU/CSU in the polls, and just three weeks before the federal elections.

It is obvious that the rise of the AfD cannot be stopped by supporting or voting for the SPD or the Greens. Even if there were to be a government majority without the AfD after the election, it would essentially implement its refugee and security policy and thus further strengthen the far right.

The Left Party will not change this either. The Wagenknecht wing of the party, which split in January to form the BSW, is now openly working with the AfD. On Friday, seven of the 10 BSW deputies in the Bundestag voted together with the AfD, CDU and FDP in favour of the controversial Immigration Restriction Act.

Since Wagenknecht's departure, the remaining Left Party has donned a somewhat more left-wing mask on the refugee issue. The party specialises in capturing social and political opposition and steering it into a dead end. But whenever it takes on government responsibility, it proves to be a loyal accomplice to the most reactionary class interests. This applies in particular to the three party veterans who are now at the centre of its election campaign—Gregor Gysi, Dietmar Bartsch and Bodo Ramelow.

Fascism cannot be stopped by protesting against its symptoms. It must be eradicated at the root, and that root is the capitalist social system.

"The excessively high tension of the international struggle and the class struggle results in the short circuit of the dictatorship, blowing out the fuses of democracy," wrote Leon Trotsky in 1929, explaining dictatorship and fascism to be the result of capitalist crisis.

In several European countries—Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands—and also in the US, far-right governments are already in power. In Austria, negotiations to form a far-right government are underway. In Belgium, Bart De Wever from the ultra-right Flemish nationalist N-VA party was sworn in as head of government on Monday. His government, which also includes Flemish Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, has set itself the goal of gutting the social budget, implementing the strictest immigration policy ever and investing heavily in

security.

Germany is no exception. The concentration of social wealth in the hands of a few billionaires and widespread poverty, exploding rearmament and declining social spending, as well as escalating trade wars and wars, are not compatible with democracy. The anti-migrant agitation and associated stepping up of the repressive powers of the state at home are directed against the entire working class.

The next German government—regardless of its composition—will drastically increase military spending. In *Welt am Sonntag* at the weekend, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte once again called on Berlin to massively increase both its military spending and its defence production. "Let me tell you very clearly: we must prepare for war," he said. "I can assure you of one thing: it will be much, much, much more than 2 percent [of GDP]."

This is the reason why all the establishment parties are moving closer to the AfD and adopting its policies.

"Resistance against the fascists can only come from the working class," reads the statement distributed by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) at the weekend rallies.

It will not allow work colleagues and neighbors to be deported, their wages to be decimated, their jobs destroyed, education and health privatized and pensions and social benefits smashed. Explosive class struggles are inevitable.

These struggles must be prepared. They need a political perspective and leadership. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is fighting for. It is the only party standing in the Bundestag elections to oppose war, rearmament and social cuts, and it defends all democratic rights, including those of migrants...

As the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the SGP advocates the unity of the international working class in order to overthrow capitalism, expropriate the billionaires and build a socialist society in which social needs take precedence over profit interests.



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