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By Johannes Stern
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Representatives of the German establishment parties vote for fascist candidate

The election of neo-Nazi Stefan Jagsch as local mayor in the Wetterau municipality of Altenstadt highlights the sharp turn to the right by the ruling class in Germany. Jagsch is the deputy state chairman of the neo-Nazi German National Party (NPD). At the weekend, it was announced that on Thursday evening, all seven present members of the local advisory council [Ortsbeirat] in Altenstadt-Waldsiedlung—including representatives of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Free Democratic Party (FDP) and Social Democratic Party (SPD)—had voted for the far-right politician.

After his election, Jagsch crowed on Facebook, “Just now, I was unanimously elected as mayor by the representatives of the Altenstadt-Waldsiedlung local advisory council. Of course, I will work for the interests of our district and continue to work constructively and across all parties with everyone. From the people—for the people!”

Jagsch is a self-confessed Nazi. On August 17, the anniversary of the death of Rudolf Hess, he commemorated the former Hitler deputy. On his Facebook page, Jagsch published a picture of the now-demolished Spandau war crimes prison in which Hess was held after his conviction in the Nuremberg Trials from 1946 up until his suicide in 1987. The post was headlined, “Crime scene Spandau: We do not forget!” And, “The fame of the deeds of the deceased lives eternally!”

Jagsch’s hateful tirades, like the programme of his party, stand in the tradition of Hitler’s Nazi Party (NSDAP). Among other things, he calls on Facebook for “species protection for Germans too” and declares that “immigration kills.” In the run-up to the Bundestag

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(federal parliament) elections in 2013, Jagsch excluded a coalition with the establishment parties, “because their behaviour promotes the death of the people [employing the Nazi term, “Volkstod”] and sometimes they publicly propagate it.”

Today, Jagsch has strong advocates with the establishment parties. In unison, the local party representatives justified their actions.

On the Hessenschau news broadcast, CDU spokesman Norbert Szilasko said, “We are completely independent on the local advisory council. We are there for the citizens of this district ... We are a good team. We are there for the citizens and no one else.” Since there was “no one else,” “especially no younger person, who is familiar with computers and can send e-mails,” they opted for Jagsch. What he does in “the party” or “privately” was his own thing. In the local advisory council, he behaved “absolutely collegially and calmly,” Szilasko said.

The local SPD branch also justified the election of the right-wing extremist. No other candidate could be found, it claimed. “In this vacuum, the NPD official came forward. In the absence of an alternative, as participants told me, all the other representatives of the other parties elected him as mayor,” said the chairman of the Altstadt SPD, Markus Brando.

The party leaderships at state and federal level have responded to the election of the high-ranking NPD official and the actions of their local groups with hypocritical horror, and called for a “correction.”

For example, CDU leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer warned, “The aim is to propose and carry through the deselection of the currently elected [person] as soon as possible.” CDU General Secretary Paul Ziemiak also demanded, in the *Bild* newspaper, that the decision be “corrected.” The procedures in Wetterau were a “disgrace,” and the competent district association would discuss “further necessary measures” against the CDU politicians involved in the vote.

The SPD leadership expressed similar views. General Secretary Lars Klingbeil said on Twitter, “The decision in Altstadt is incredible and cannot be justified by anything. It must be reversed immediately.” The SPD had “a very clear attitude: we do not cooperate with Nazis! Never!” That applied “in the federal government, in the states, in the municipalities.” Deputy SPD federal chairman and candidate for the SPD party leadership Ralf Stegner warned, “This damages the reputation of social democracy!” The election of the NPD politician was “unbearable and completely unacceptable.”

In fact, the “cooperation” with Jagsch is not a lapse. The leaders of the CDU and SPD are particularly alarmed because the election of the NPD politician has made it clear how far to the right the ruling class has now moved, 80 years after the German attack on Poland and the beginning of the Second World War. While fascism and militarism are deeply hated by the people, representatives of governing and opposition parties have no problem in voting for and working closely with a Nazi politician.

The events in Altenstadt reveal what is on the agenda at federal level. After the federal elections in 2017, the grand coalition of the CDU and SPD not only made the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which has close ties to the NPD, leader of the official opposition in parliament, but systematically **involved** it in parliamentary work. Since then, the establishment parties have more and more openly courted the extreme right in order to enforce their policies of militarism, state rearmament, and social cuts.

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When Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD), in his speech on the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War in Warsaw on September 1, made no mention at all of the annihilation of the Jews, we **commented**:

“Above all, Steinmeier’s silence about the Holocaust was a concession to the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) in his own country. Within the framework of Germany’s return to an aggressive imperialist foreign policy, the ruling class is systematically building up and promoting this fascistic party. On the same day Steinmeier delivered his speech in Warsaw, the AfD emerged from two state elections—in Saxony and Brandenburg—as the second-largest party.”

Since then, leading politicians have been falling over themselves in their advances to the AfD, demanding that their right-wing and racist positions no longer be “marginalized” and “denounced.”

Last week, for example, in an interview with the *Passau Neue Presse*, FDP federal chairman Wolfgang Kubicki warned against “circumventing voters of the AfD.” One must “argue more, instead of denouncing them, and conduct a constructive debate.” The “policy of radical demarcation” did not help. “On the contrary, it has been more harmful.” It would “not suffice to exclude and denounce the AfD” and automatically always brand everything as radical right-wing “that you do not like.”

Representatives of the other parties expressed themselves similarly, including the **Left Party**.

Speaking to RedaktionsNetzwerk Deutschland, parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht complained about the dealings of her party “with AfD voters, who are called racists all over.” If we want “more popularity again, we have to change.”

By that she means the commitment to an openly right-wing programme. It is “not just about our attitude to immigration.” “Home” [“Heimat”] and “family” were “for most people ... something very important.” “Security” was about “societal security, but also about the protection against crime.”

The sharp shift to the right by the entire ruling class, which found its expression in the election of Jagsch, is also particularly clear in the case of the far-right Humboldt Professor Jörg Baberowski. Although his trivialization of Nazism (“Hitler was not cruel”) and his refugee baiting has long been **celebrated** by the NPD, the federal government recently gave its backing to the professor in an official **statement** that declared any criticism of his positions to be an attack on the “freedom of scholarship.” Baberowski is defended by the right-wing extremists using the same absurd argument.

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