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Why are multi-billionaire Elon Musk and the German Springer publishing house backing the far-right Alternative for Germany?



President-elect Donald Trump listens to Elon Musk in Boca Chica, Texas, November 19, 2024. [AP Photo/Brandon Bell]

Multi-billionaire and Trump confidant Elon Musk is continuing his campaign of support for the Alternative for Germany (AfD). After announcing on X that only the AfD could save Germany and calling on people to vote for the far-right party in the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper, he held a long conversation with AfD Chairwoman Alice Weidel on X on Thursday evening, which was followed by an audience of up to 210,000.

Musk and Weidel showered each other with compliments for 75 minutes, chatting and giggling and cheering each other on with admiring shouts of “Yeah.” The obscene spectacle showed that the two agree on all major political issues: deportation of migrants, deregulation of the economy, tax cuts for the rich, rejection of COVID-19 protection measures, return to nuclear energy, massive rearmament, support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza and so on.

Musk emphatically repeated his appeal to vote for the AfD. He recommended to the people of Germany:

If you are unhappy with the situation, you must vote for change, and that is why I'm really strongly recommending that people vote for the AfD. That's my strong recommendation. As I have said publicly, I think only the AfD can save Germany, and I just want to be very clear about that: Only the AfD can save Germany, end of story! People really need to get behind the AfD, otherwise things are going to get very very much worse in Germany.

With a fortune of more than \$400 billion, Musk is the richest man in the world. He is one of the closest confidants of future US President Donald Trump, for whom he is to head an "Department of Government Efficiency" with the declared aim of slashing the budget by more than a quarter and cutting hundreds of thousands of jobs. Musk uses the social network Twitter, which he bought for \$44 billion and renamed it X to promote far-right movements around the world.

The fact that Alice Weidel is now one of Musk's favorites alongside Argentinian President Javier Milei, Italian head of government Giorgia Meloni and the British Reform UK party sheds a clear light on the class character of the AfD. It has won votes by exploiting the anger in the working class at the established parties, which have overseen only social decline and redistribution in favor of the rich, and steering them in an ultra-right direction. It is now openly identifying with the most parasitic representatives of capital.

Donald Trump, who made his fortune in the criminal milieu of property speculators and casino operators, is forming a government of oligarchs to pursue a policy of social austerity, military conquest and fascist dictatorship.

The re-election of the would-be führer is "an expression of a fundamental realignment of politics in the United States and around the world," the WSWS wrote in its New Year's statement. "The new government will be a government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. On a scale unprecedented in American history, the oligarchy will exercise direct control over the state." The wealth of Musk and other billionaires in Trump's administration is estimated at almost a half trillion dollars.

Trump is pursuing a policy of internal repression, culminating in the threat to forcibly deport millions of immigrants and military expansion. He has threatened to annex Greenland and the Panama Canal by force and to make Canada the 51st American state.

He is demanding that European NATO members increase their military spending to 5 percent of their gross domestic product. For Germany, which currently only reaches 2 percent thanks to the special fund of €100 billion, this would mean a quadrupling of the regular military

budget to €200 billion per year. This would correspond to around half of the entire federal budget.

Alice Weidel supports this goal, which could only be achieved by abolishing almost all social spending. She told ZDF television that spending above the 5 percent mentioned by Trump would also be conceivable if necessary: “I think that is possible and very likely if they are really serious about strengthening the Bundeswehr [German Armed Forces] and also about our national defense.”

One of the most bizarre parts of Weidel’s conversation with Musk was a passage in which the two referred to Adolf Hitler as a “socialist” and “communist,” attacking the Nazi dictator from the right, so to speak.

When asked by Musk to comment on the accusation that the AfD was “far right and somehow associated with Nazism,” Weidel replied that the National Socialists were in fact, as the name suggests, socialists. “Yeah, yeah, they nationalized industries like crazy,” Musk added. Weidel continued:

Yes, absolutely. Hitler was a Communist and he considered himself as a Socialist. They state-funded private companies and then they asked for taxes, huge taxes. And then they also nationalized the entire industry. The biggest success after that terrible era in our history was to label Adolf Hitler as a right-winger and conservative. He was exactly the opposite, he wasn’t a conservative, he wasn’t a libertarian, he was a communist, socialist guy. We are exactly the opposite, we are a libertarian conservative party.

Every school child knows that Hitler was a fanatical anti-communist. The Nazi paramilitary gangs brutally persecuted communists and killed many even before Hitler came to power. As soon as he came to power, Hitler banned the Communist Party and soon afterwards also the Social Democrats and the trade unions. The first concentration camps were not built for Jews but for communists and social democrats.

The leading representatives of business, the military and politics made Hitler Reich Chancellor and, with the Enabling Act, dictator because they needed him to crush the organized working class and prepare for war. Hitler therefore had many international admirers, including in the US. One of the most famous was Henry Ford, who, like Elon Musk today, ran a large, internationally active car company.

During the Second World War, the Nazis then escalated exploitation to unprecedented levels of brutality. Twenty-six million people from all over Europe were compelled to perform forced labor for the economy in Germany and the occupied territories. Concentration camp prisoners were literally worked to death. Hitler did not touch capitalist private property. The

only expropriation carried out by his regime was the “Aryanisation” of Jewish property, which was distributed to his minions.

The state only influenced production to the extent required by the war economy. It did not cut the profits of the capitalists. To this day, the fortunes of many German billionaire families—the Klattens and Quandts (BMW), the Porsches and Piëchs (Volkswagen), the Schaefflers (Schaeffler and Continental) or August von Finck (Degussa), who donated millions to the AfD—can be traced back to the crimes of the Nazis.

Leon Trotsky wrote in his excellent article “Portrait of National Socialism” in 1933:

German fascism, like Italian fascism, raised itself to power on the backs of the petty bourgeoisie, which it turned into a battering ram against the organizations of the working class and the institutions of democracy. But fascism in power is least of all the rule of the petty bourgeoisie. ... National Socialism raises itself over the nation as the worst form of imperialism. ... The compulsory concentration of all forces and resources of the people in the interests of imperialism—the true historic mission of the fascist dictatorship—means preparation for war; and this task, in its turn, brooks no internal resistance and leads to a further mechanical concentration of power. Fascism cannot be reformed or retired from service. It can only be overthrown. The political orbit of the regime leans upon the alternative, war or revolution.

The conservative, libertarian program that Weidel claims to represent is based on the Nazi program. It is the programme of subordinating all social needs to the unrestrained enrichment of the oligarchs and to the requirements of imperialist war, as well as the removal of all barriers that stand in the way of this goal. The state is to be reduced to its repressive tasks - police, secret services and military - in order to suppress social resistance and wage imperialist wars. Social tasks such as education, health and infrastructure, on the other hand, are to be privatised or—like social welfare, care, pensions and environmental protection—cut altogether.

This program is supported in one form or another by all established parties.

Free Democratic Party (FDP) leader Christian Lindner called for “more Musk and Milei” after the break-up of the coalition government with the Social Democrats and Greens, and begged Elon Musk via X to work with him instead of Weidel.

Leading Christian Democratic Union (CDU) politician Juli Klöckner posted on her social media channels on Thursday the quote: “You don’t have to vote for the AfD to get what you want. There is a democratic alternative: the CDU.” She only removed it again after protests.

BSW leader Sahra Wagenknecht, who herself debated with Weidel on Welt-TV in October and did not rule out political cooperation, merely accused the AfD leader of getting involved with a US billionaire instead of representing German imperialist interests. In a video statement, Wagenknecht declared: “Now the AfD has also found its US godfather. Anyone who is fed up with the subservience of German politicians to the US establishment can only vote for BSW. We stand for a self-confident policy that puts the interests of our country at the center.”

The established press is now also openly campaigning for the AfD for the first time. Following protests and resignations at the Springer publishing house due to the publication of Musk’s election appeal for the AfD on the front page of *Welt am Sonntag*, it is now clear that publishing boss and owner Mathias Döpfner was personally behind the decision.

Döpfner, who bought the US media outlets Politico and Business Insider, is an admirer of Musk, to whom he presented the “Axel Springer Award” four years ago. He maintains a direct line of communication to Musk. According to research by news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Döpfner is said to have recommended Musk to buy Twitter and offered to manage the social network for him.

Der Spiegel has also learnt that conservative daily *Die Welt* has invited Musk and Weidel to its “economic summit” at the end of January, which Chancellor Olaf Scholz, CDU lead candidate Friedrich Merz as well as Robert Habeck (Greens) and Christian Lindner (FDP) also want to attend. This has not yet been confirmed.

The so-called firewall, which the established parties and media have previously invoked against the far-right AfD, is in reality a crumbling ramshackle wall. Ruling circles across Europe are reacting to Trump’s return to the White House and the associated intensification of international and social tensions with a sharp lurch to the right.

In Italy and the Netherlands, fascist parties are already leading the government, in France the far-right Rassemblement National is on the threshold of the presidential palace, and in Austria the ÖVP, the sister party of the German CDU and CSU, is negotiating with the far-right FPÖ to form a government under the leadership of Herbert Kickl, who has close ties to the neo-Nazi camp. It is only a matter of time before the AfD is included in a government.

This can only be prevented by an independent movement of the working class that combines the fight against social cuts, fascism and war with the fight against their cause: capitalism.

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