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The mass mobilisation against the far-right Alternative for Germany and the fight against fascism



People gather as they protest against the AfD party and right-wing extremism in front of the Reichstag building in Berlin, Germany, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024. [AP Photo/Ebrahim Noroozi]

The mass protests against the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) are part of an international movement against the right-wing politics of the ruling class. The enormous opposition to anti-refugee propaganda, war and inequality must be developed into a conscious movement of the working class against the government and capitalism.

Over the weekend, well over a million people protested against the AfD in hundreds of German cities after the public exposure of a secret meeting at which far-right politicians from the AfD and Christian Democrats' "Union of Values," together with business representatives, discussed plans for the deportation of millions of people from immigrant backgrounds.

The size of the demonstrations, which exceeded the organisers' expectations many times over, showed the enormous opposition to the return of fascism and war within the population. After the terrible experiences of two world wars and the Holocaust, the rejection of German imperialism and militarism is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the masses.

Objectively speaking, the mass protests are not only directed against the AfD, but also against the right-wing policies of the government and all the parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament). They are part of an international mobilisation against pro-war policies and social austerity.

For months, huge demonstrations opposing Israel's genocide against the Palestinians have been taking place all over the world. In France, 150,000 people demonstrated this past weekend against the immigration "reform" law that is celebrated as an "ideological victory" by the fascist Marine Le Pen. Labour disputes and social protests are on the rise everywhere. A six-day strike by train drivers begins in Germany on Tuesday. Farmers' protests against government cuts are also continuing and spreading across Europe.

However, many of the anti-fascist demonstrations' organisers are close to the Bundestag parties and aim to subordinate the protests to the government, the policies of the establishment parties and the state machine. What they mean by "democracy" is the defence of the existing order and the strengthening of the secret service, police and army, which are themselves infiltrated by far-right forces, and not, like most demonstrators, freedom of expression, social well-being and peace.

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This is why they invited representatives of the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and Christian Democrats (CDU) to speak at the protests and tried in many places to suppress denunciations of the government's AfD-like deportation policy. The same applies to the widespread opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza, which is criminalised by the government under the false accusation of antisemitism. Palestinian groups have reported that they have been partially excluded from the demonstrations against the AfD.

Slogans such as "All together against the AfD" are intended to suggest that the Bundestag parties stand on the side of the demonstrators and are allies in the fight against the right-wing threat. In fact, the shift to the right is coming from the ruling class.

In recent years, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the *World Socialist Web Site* have shown in detail how far-right positions, including the relativisation of Nazi crimes, have been systematically made acceptable by bourgeois politicians of all stripes, as well as by academia and the media. The AfD is not an accidental phenomenon, but was deliberately built up and courted in order to enforce the hated pro-war policy and social austerity against working people.

All parties in the Bundestag are now implementing the AfD's programme. While the AfD is debating deportations in secret meetings, the SPD, the Greens and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) passed the so-called "Repatriation Improvement Act" last week. This measure authorizes a massive tightening of naturalisation and residence laws, which will result in mass deportations. Support for the genocide in Gaza, incitement against Muslims and the rapid rearmament of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), which are central pillars of the AfD programme, have likewise been enacted by the German government.

The powerful demonstrations against the AfD show that this shift to the right is not coming from working people, but from the ruling class. If the AfD is able to achieve electoral success, it is only because the other parties are deeply hated and there is no left-wing alternative. The nominally "left" parties—the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party—compete with each other to promote militarism, social cuts and additional billions in handouts handing to the rich.

This is an international phenomenon. All the pseudo-left parties, such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), defend capitalism and pave the way for the most right-wing forces. Openly far-right governments, such as Milei in Argentina and Meloni in Italy, do not differ significantly from “Social Democrat” Olaf Scholz or “Democrat” Joe Biden in terms of war, social austerity and attacks on refugees.

The ruling class is resorting to authoritarian methods of rule everywhere because the endless enrichment of the oligarchy and the policy of war to redivide the world cannot be enforced by democratic means. The genocide in Gaza shows that the ruling class is resorting to mass murder and fascist methods.

Under these conditions, the German elite is returning to its fascist traditions. Hitler was not elected by a majority, but was brought to power by a conspiracy of bourgeois parties, business representatives and the military. Unlike the AfD today, he led a mass movement of lumpen petty-bourgeois elements, but he only received just under a third of the vote in the last reasonably free election.

Reich President Hindenburg, whom the SPD had previously supported as a supposed bulwark against fascism, appointed Hitler Reich chancellor in January 1933. Two months later, all the bourgeois parties gave him dictatorial powers.

Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition were the only ones who understood this development and opposed it with a progressive perspective. They declared that fascism was a product of the capitalist crisis and could only be stopped by the independent mobilisation of the working class. They opposed capitalist barbarism with the program of socialist world revolution.

Today, these lessons are of burning relevance. Fighting in alliance with the SPD, Greens and Left Party against the AfD would be like trying to drive out the devil in alliance with Beelzebub. These very parties are implementing the extreme right-wing programme of genocide, war and inequality and are courting the AfD. They do this because they defend capitalism and represent the interests of the oligarchs.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in its [New Year's perspective](#):

All talk about defending democracy and fighting fascism while ignoring the fundamental question of class and economic power—and, therefore, recognizing the necessity for the mobilization of the working class on a global scale for the overthrow of capitalism—is cynical and politically impotent demagogy. The wealth of the billionaires must be expropriated and the gigantic corporations must be transformed, without compensation to the large shareholders, into publicly controlled utilities, run on the basis of social need, not private profit.

The crucial task is to develop the mobilisation against the AfD into an international movement of the working class against capitalism and to equip it with a clear socialist programme and the necessary political leadership. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) are fighting for in the European elections. Support our participation in the European elections! Take up the fight for socialism!

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