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German media promotes fascist oligarch Musk and the far-right Alternative for Germany

German politicians and the media have reacted to Donald Trump's election victory in the US by aggressively normalizing fascism. At the turn of the year, the influential *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper published a guest article by US oligarch and Trump supporter Elon Musk, who controls hundreds of billions of euros, entitled "Why Elon Musk is backing the AfD" (Alternative for Germany).



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

In the article, which openly engages in election propaganda for the fascists, Musk writes: "Germany is at a critical point—its future is teetering on the brink of economic and cultural collapse." Only the AfD can save Germany from "becoming a shadow of its former self. It can lead the country into a future in which economic prosperity, cultural integrity and technological innovation are not just pipe dreams but reality."

At the heart of Musk's comment is the call for unfettered economic deregulation, which he associates with the AfD's program but is in fact shared by all governing parties. Musk writes that the AfD had "understood that economic freedom is not only desirable but necessary." He writes that the AfD's approach to reducing government overregulation, lowering taxes and deregulating the market reflected the principles that have made his own companies, such as Tesla and SpaceX, successful.

While Musk has amassed a fortune of nearly \$500 billion in recent years, for Tesla workers this "success" means literally working themselves to death under conditions of brutal exploitation.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has defined Trump's presidency as the "violent realignment of the American political superstructure to correspond with the real social relations that exist in the United States." The US ruling class is relying on the fascist Trump to advance its program of social counterrevolution, mass deportations, dictatorship and world war in the interests of the oligarchy.

A corresponding development is also taking place in Germany. The aim of February's early federal election called by the ruling class is to prepare the ground for an extreme right-wing government that will brutally enforce the interests of German capital at home and abroad. The publication of Musk's election advertisement for the AfD by one of the flagship newspapers of the right-wing Springer press and the reactions to it in politics and the media make this clear.

Numerous media commentaries openly praised Musk and defended the decision of *Welt* and thus also the election advertising for the AfD. A commentary in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* described the criticism of Elon Musk's "'interference' in German politics" as "crap about Musk." Apart from "his loud comments on X," he "put in a nutshell what has to be said in the German election campaign."

In an accompanying commentary to Musk's piece in *Welt am Sonntag*, the paper's new editor-in-chief, Jan Philipp Burgard, praised Musk as "the greatest entrepreneurial genius of our time." Musk's "diagnosis" was "correct, but his proposed therapy that only the AfD can save Germany, is fatally wrong." Burgard does not cite the AfD's fascist program, with which he basically agrees, as the reason but rather its lack of aggressiveness towards Russia and China.

"Demands such as reducing bureaucracy, deregulation and tax cuts are not wrong just because they come from the AfD," writes Burgard. But Musk seemed to "overlook the

geopolitical framework in which the AfD wants to position Germany.” It was seeking “rapprochement with Russia” and “finds friendlier words for China than for the US.”

When German politicians criticize Musk’s attacks on government representatives—for example, he called German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democrat, SPD) an “anti-democratic tyrant”—they do so from a similar standpoint. For example, after Trump’s inauguration, the leader of the SPD parliamentary group, Rolf Mützenich, called on the German government to clarify “whether the repeated disrespect, defamation and interference in the election campaign were also being expressed on behalf of the new US administration.” He said there was a need for “clarity” on this, since “international challenges can only be tackled in an unencumbered relationship between us and the USA.”

The meaning of this is unmistakable. Despite growing transatlantic tensions and Trump’s threats of trade war measures against Germany and Europe as well, the German ruling class is seeking—at least for the moment—to ally itself with the US fascist in order to escalate the pro-war policy against Russia and worldwide and to push through the interests of German imperialism. It is precisely this policy that ultimately requires the establishment of an authoritarian regime and the rehabilitation of fascism in Germany itself.

In the current editorial of leading news weekly *Der Spiegel*, the magazine’s Editor-in-Chief Dirk Kurbjuweit complains that Germany had “shrunk” last year. It could hardly call itself a medium-sized power anymore and was on its way to becoming a dwarf in world politics. In “this finding” was “the essential task for the new federal government, which will take office in the spring. A turnaround towards growth is needed, both economically and politically.”

Kurbjuweit identified “a crude mixture of obsession with history and historical amnesia” as one of the “main reasons” for Germany’s “dwarfing.” In this country, “history dictates politics more strongly than elsewhere, which often leads to self-restraint.”

For example, “the inadequate supply of Ukraine with long-range weapons ... is also justified by the fact that Nazi Germany invaded and devastated the Soviet Union. Therefore, German missiles should not be allowed to hit Moscow.”

Analogous to the slogan “dare more Musk” issued by Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) leader Christian Lindner and eagerly taken up by the media, Kurbjuweit’s comment could be titled “dare more Hitler.” What Germany lacked, he writes, were “coolheaded, well thought-out strategies, grand strategies, for the essential policy areas.” The next federal government “should, in addition to domestic security, concentrate on sustained growth and Germany’s position in the world.”

That the call for Germany to play a greater role in the world and the associated *Zeitenwende* (“new era“) in domestic and social policy should come from Kurbjuweit of all people underlines the fact that the ruling class’ turn towards world war and fascism has been deliberately prepared for some time. It was Kurbjuweit who, shortly after representatives of the then grand coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and SPD proclaimed the end of military restraint at the 2014 Munich Security Conference, published the infamous essay “Culpability Question Divides Historians Today“ in *Der Spiegel*.

In it, Kurbjuweit attacked the historian Fritz Fischer, who had meticulously shown in his work *Griff nach der Weltmacht (Germany’s Aims in the First World War)* that the German Reich was one of the main perpetrators of the First World War. Kurbjuweit quoted the now emeritus professor at Humboldt University Herfried Münkler, saying that Fischer’s arguments were “outrageous, in principle”.

With regard to German crimes during World War II, Kurbjuweit introduced the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte, who died in 2016, into the discussion. During the *Historikerstreit* (Historians’ Dispute) in the 1980s, Nolte had already declared that the Holocaust was a justified reaction to the Soviet Union. Kurbjuweit quoted the Berlin “historian” and Nolte supporter Jörg Baberowski as follows: “Hitler was no psychopath, and he wasn’t vicious. He didn’t want people to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table.”

Around 11 years after this repulsive trivialization of Hitler and Nazism, the warnings issued at the time by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and its youth organization IYSSE have been fully confirmed. The trivialization of the historic crimes of German imperialism serves the return to an imperialist world war policy and the establishment of a fascist regime to defend the privileges of the capitalist oligarchy against the growing opposition in the working class.

This development places enormous class struggles on the agenda. The mass layoffs of 35,000 workers and wage cuts of almost 20 percent at Volkswagen, agreed shortly before Christmas between politicians, management and the trade union bureaucracy, are only the prelude to an all-out war against the working class aimed at smashing all remaining social gains.

“The decisive question” is how to arm the mass opposition that is developing “with a revolutionary leadership and a socialist perspective,” emphasizes the SGP’s election appeal. “Only if the masses independently intervene in the political process, expropriate the big banks and corporations and place them under democratic control, can war and social catastrophe be stopped.”

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