

German Social Democrats take up racist program of Thilo Sarrazin

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The Social Democratic Party (SPD) announced recently its intention to commence a formal procedure to expel party member Thilo Sarrazin, but it would be a big mistake to conclude that this means the SPD is prepared to distance itself from Sarrazin's thoroughly rightwing, anti-Islamist positions outlined in his book *Germany Abolishes Itself*.

Just the opposite is the case. The SPD is moving against Sarrazin not because it has any dispute with his policies, but because the longtime party member and central banker too clearly revealed the thoroughly racist and anti-working class content of those positions.

That the SPD and Sarrazin are of like mind on "integration" policy was made clear at a special party conference called last weekend by party chairman Sigmar Gabriel.

Gabriel, who has thrown his weight behind Sarrazin's expulsion, gave an interview just a few days before the SPD gathering to *Der Spiegel* in which he advocated the same policies of the latter—and in scarcely less racist terms.

After a few perfunctory remarks about the possibilities "for learn[ing] language, family centers in socially deprived areas, all day schooling and training places", Gabriel came to his main point: "Anyone, who in the long term rejects all offers of integration has as little right to remain in Germany as foreign financed preachers of hate in mosques. And where there are criminal hotspots, whether they are German or dominated by immigrants, then we clearly need more police at a local level".

There is not a trace in these remarks of the once widespread belief among social democrats that the best crime policy is a good social policy. In its stead is the menacing language that used to be the preserve of the far right.

Gabriel's references to those who "reject all offers of integration" or "preach hate" is language well understood in European ruling circles to mean "immigrants" and "Muslims". Those who refuse "integration"—i.e., those who refuse to accept social misery without complaint or else oppose German imperialism—will face deportation (they will have "little right to remain in Germany".) The immigrant ghettos will be patrolled by "more police at a local level".

The SPD leader bluntly appealed for a policy based on law and order, while appealing to an ethnic distinction between "Germans" in both Germany and Austria and "foreigners".

"One must respect the feeling of security on the part of Germans", Gabriel explained. "The mayor of Vienna has just stationed more security forces particularly in municipal areas to ensure that public housing regulations are kept. He was no longer prepared to accept a situation where natives move away and large housing units are dominated by foreigners".

According to Gabriel the emergence of ghettos for immigrant workers and their families has nothing to do with reduced job opportunities, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination on the housing market. Instead, in Gabriel's opinion, they result from the fact that immigrants are not willing to follow public housing rules, and thus drive away native citizens. His solution is more police and security forces.

Gabriel even seeks to resolve educational problems with more repression against the poor: "We should send the police to all those who fail to send their children regularly and punctually to school, and they will be forced to pay fines which hurt—even if they are dependent on welfare".

This interview with *Der Spiegel* was Gabriel's clear preamble to the SPD congress, which continued in a

similar vein.

In order to ensure there is no confusion that the expulsion of Sarrazin in any way represents a rejection of his policies, discussion on the theme of integration at the congress was headed by the mayor of the Berlin suburb of Neukölln, Heinz Buschkowsky—a man who has made no secret over the years of his German nationalist leanings.

Gabriel himself took the opportunity of introducing the discussion among Buschkowsky, the sociologist Naika Foroutan and the social worker Lothar Kennenberg. In his remarks, Gabriel quoted the former federal President Johannes Rau SPD (1931-2006) and the latter's profession that he can "understand" parents who are worried about educational prospects for their children at schools with a high proportion of foreigners, as well as fears arising from "above average crime rates among foreigners and emigrants".

Gabriel made no mention of the completely justified fears of immigrant workers and their families following the racist tirades of Sarrazin, which have been taken up by influential political figures and media pundits.

In the course of the discussion at the congress Buschkowsky defended Gabriel's remarks in *Der Spiegel* about those "unwilling to integrate" with the remark: "Of course, this is self evident".

The social scientist Naika Foroutan countered that Buschkowsky's remarks were "an unproductive signal" running counter to the aims of Social Democratic policy, which, she asserted, seeks to defend the socially disadvantaged. Foroutan has evidently slept through the past two decades and thus has failed to notice that it was the SPD, which implemented the most devastating welfare cuts in German post war history—the Agenda 2010—and is directly responsible, in its coalition with the Left Party, for the decline of living standards in the German capital of Berlin. On only one occasion did Foroutan address the real consequences of SPD policies, deploring the fact that there are too few language teachers at the school in Berlin Wedding attended by her children.

For his part, Buschkowsky expressed indignation that migrant workers need language teachers in the first place. He went on to argue that every individual is responsible for his own fate—by which he meant those who are poor and remain poor only have themselves to blame. This is in fact very similar to the position

defended by Sarrazin, although Buschkowsky did dissociate himself from the genetic theories put forward by his fellow party member.

The SPD congress adopted a resolution for a Social Democratic integration policy, which combines law and order slogans with worthless declarations against social division and discrimination.



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