

Racist politician Thilo Sarrazin remains in the SPD

Dietmar Henning
28 April 2011

Racism and eugenics are compatible with the basic values of the German Social Democratic Party. This is the conclusion to be drawn from the decision made by the SPD last Thursday to drop proceedings to expel Thilo Sarrazin from its ranks.

Sarrazin is the author of the racist diatribe *Germany is abolishing itself*, in which he fulminates against foreigners, and Muslims in particular. Following the publication of the book last summer and a subsequent spate of interviews and lectures dedicated to the same theme, the SPD in Berlin, the Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf SPD district association, a Frankfurt district association of the SPD, and finally the federal executive of the party initiated expulsion proceedings against Sarrazin.

Last Thursday, after five hours of deliberation with, amongst others, SPD General Secretary Andrea Nahles and Sarrazin himself, the Arbitration Commission of the Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf district association agreed to withdraw expulsion procedures.

Sarrazin was defended at the arbitration process by Klaus von Dohnanyi (SPD), a former mayor of Hamburg who had publicly supported Sarrazin's book last year. According to the chair of the Arbitration Commission, Sybille Uken, the proceedings were conducted in a constructive, respectful, serious and intensive manner. The commission then reached an accord based on a statement made by Sarrazin.

In the statement Sarrazin does not take back any of his racist views. He merely declares that his theses were never intended to "violate social-democratic principles". He also maintained that he did not argue in his book that social Darwinist theories be put into political practice: "All children are of equal worth as human beings". He had also not called for a "selective promotion and population policy", and it was by no means his intention to discriminate against migrants.

This is clearly not the case. His book is based on well-known racist presumptions. In the book he declares that ethnic differences are at the root of social problems and denounces immigrants with a Muslim background. Sarrazin,

formerly a long-time finance senator in Berlin who played a major role in the social decline of entire neighbourhoods, states that the alleged below-average intelligence and unwillingness to integrate on the part of immigrants were the main cause for increased poverty and attendant social problems: "It is not material but intellectual and moral poverty which is the problem".

He even reduces crime to an ethnic issue. Sarrazin writes, "[I]n no other religion is the transition to violence and terrorism so fluid" as in Islam. He writes preposterously that "20 percent of all violent crime in Berlin is perpetrated by just 1,000 Turkish and Arab young offenders".

To support his thesis, Sarrazin use false statistics and long discredited, pseudo-biological arguments which, since the Nuremberg Race Laws and the eugenics of the Nazis, were the sole preserve of neo-fascist circles. Predictably the neo-Nazi NPD published its own election poster some months back, featuring a picture of the book by Sarrazin and the inscription: "Sarrazin is right!"

Sarrazin then confirmed the poisonous, racial nature of his thesis in a series of interviews, discussions and lectures.

Shortly before the publication of his book he declared in an interview with the *Berliner Morgenpost*, "All Jews share a particular gene". And in late September 2010, six weeks after the first chapter of his book had been printed in *Der Spiegel*, he claimed in Munich that successive German generations were being overrun by migrants from Anatolia and that countermeasures must be taken—for example, cutting social welfare for immigrants.

Back in October 2009 he wrote unabashedly in the magazine *Lettre Internationale* that Turks and Arabs had "no productive purpose except for the fruit and vegetable trade". They were constantly producing new "headscarf girls" and had conquered Germany "with a higher birth rate". An initial attempt to begin expulsion proceedings against him failed in March 2010. At that time the party's arbitration committee declared that the SPD would have to "tolerate such provocative statements".

The SPD leadership is very well aware of the

consequences of withdrawing Sarrazin's expulsion. In September of last year, SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel had justified expulsion proceedings, declaring, "Whoever recommends us to tolerate this message in our ranks is calling upon us to abandon all of what social democracy stands for: our image of freedom and people capable of emancipation".

It is not Sarrazin who has changed his stance since then, but rather Gabriel and his General Secretary Andrea Nahles, who initiated the reconciliation with Sarrazin and then publicly justified the decision not to expel him. Gabriel covered her back: "Ms. Nahles naturally has my support for her actions", he told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

The reason for this change of mind is the rapid change in the political situation. For years the social gulf between rich and poor has deepened. Following the international financial crisis, trillions of euros from public funds were pumped into the banks. Now these debts incurred by national governments are to be repaid by massive cuts in social spending and public services.

To divert attention from the resulting social crisis and divide the working class, the ruling class across Europe is stoking up xenophobia and racism. In a number of European countries—Italy, Hungary, Holland, Denmark, Netherlands, and Switzerland—anti-immigrant parties are either directly involved in government or backing the ruling parties.

In France, the Sarkozy government is fuelling one anti-Islamic campaign after another. With the support of the Socialist Party, it has agreed to such discriminatory laws as a ban on Muslim headscarves in public schools and a ban on the burka.

By reconciling itself with Sarrazin, the SPD is taking the same path. It is committed to racism and xenophobia as part of its political program. As the former governing party in coalitions led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder the SPD was instrumental in a huge distribution of social wealth from the working population to the rich. Such anti-social measures as Hartz IV, 400-Euro-jobs and other forms of low-wage work, plus the increase in retirement age to 67 years, all bear the party's signature.

In a process of continuous decline, the party is turning to the right at breathtaking speed. A party that prided itself on its opposition to rampant anti-Semitism a century ago now adopts anti-Islamism as its political program.

Many comments suggest that the SPD made its hurried peace with Sarrazin because of the upcoming Berlin elections in September.

On Tuesday the *Bild* newspaper quoted a "party strategist" who said, "We have to pour all our resources into Berlin. If the election turns out badly for us there then it will mean curtains for the SPD. This realisation has played an

important role in the Sarrazin process". Accordingly, the withdrawal of the expulsion process was prepared for weeks by Klaus Wowereit, the governing Mayor of Berlin, and General Secretary Nahles.

In a disgraceful comment, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote that the deal struck with Sarrazin was "a fairly decent deal in a pretty bad situation. Because the passage through the various instances up to the Federal Arbitration Commission of the party would have done far more harm than Sarrazin ever could have".

In fact, that makes the response of the party even more reprehensible. After a decade in power in the German capital, in an alliance with the Left Party, during which time it imposed unprecedented social cuts, the SPD faces the prospect of losing office. In response the party is playing the card of racism to remain in power.

This comes as no surprise. In a *Der Spiegel* interview before the conflict with Sarrazin, party leader Gabriel made clear that the SPD is a past master at encouraging xenophobia. Gabriel demanded the removal of "hate preachers" and migrants who refused to integrate, as well as more police in crime hotspots. "The sense of security on the part of Germans is also something which deserves respect", he told *Der Spiegel*.

There has only been isolated criticism over the affair from inside the ranks of the SPD—mainly from members who have an immigrant background.

Sergey Lagodinsky, a Jewish migrant from Eastern Europe and founder of the Jewish Socialists Working Group, has resigned in protest at the handling of the issue of Thilo Sarrazin by the SPD.

SPD member Taner Beklen asked Zeit-Online how he could answer people "who ask me if it is not paradoxical that I, as an immigrant, am member of a party, whose ranks include people who tell me that I am dumb due to genetics?"

An online statement by SPD members, written by Aziz Bozkurt, has so far gained 700 supporters. She complains about the "zigzag course of the SPD" and appeals to everyone not to quit the party.

Such views will have no influence on the course of the party. Already under the leadership of Schröder, the SPD demonstrated it would not budge from its Agenda 2010, despite broad popular opposition.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact