

The fight against the right requires a struggle against the SPD-Left Party government

Christoph Dreier
26 August 2011

Millions in Berlin have been shocked and disgusted by the campaign of the extreme right in the upcoming elections to the House of Representatives—in particular by their inhumane posters and anti-Islamic propaganda. This weekend, the far-right formation “Pro Germany” intends to hold an “Anti-Islamisation Congress” in the capital, which has justly been met with opposition from the vast majority of the population.

However, the demonstrations and blockades organized by an alliance of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Greens, Left Party, trade unions and some antifascist groups will not put an end to the spectre of the far right. On the contrary, the very parties and unions that are now boasting about their opposition to the right wing in the election are in fact responsible for ensuring that the right-wing extremists dare to go on the offensive.

Ten years of an SPD-Left Party Senate (city government) in Berlin—falsely claiming to be carrying out left-wing policies—has brought about mass despair. At 13.5 percent, the official unemployment rate in Berlin is the highest of all Germany’s federal states, and the real figure is much higher. Some 441,000 people depend on welfare. The Social Report 2010 noted that poverty has risen sharply even among those with a regular job.

The Senate’s policy of austerity has left social questions to the extreme right, which now combines them with its racist propaganda. This is only possible because the unions have systematically sabotaged any serious fight by the victims of social cutbacks. They have used every means to prevent workers intervening as an independent factor into political life to oppose the cuts.

The parties controlling the Senate are responsible for the offensive of the extreme right, and not merely due

to their disastrous social policies. These parties are also moving ever farther to the right and deliberately stir up racism and anti-Islamism. It is no coincidence that the campaign posters of “Pro Germany” refer to the man who, as finance minister in Berlin, was largely responsible for the cuts of the SPD-Left Party Senate.

In his book *Germany Abolishes Itself*, Thilo Sarrazin, a member of the SPD, claims that Muslim immigrants have a long tradition of inbreeding and a genetic deficiency of intelligence. He calls for strict limits on their immigration. In April this year, an SPD arbitration tribunal decided that such racist theses were insufficient grounds for expelling Sarrazin, and he could remain a member of the party.

In the seven years that Sarrazin led the finance department in the Berlin city council, his chauvinist and racist positions, which he expressed on several occasions, never bothered the Left Party. At no time did they place a question mark over the coalition.

The Berlin Senate not only silently supported Sarrazin, it actively implemented his programme. In the last ten years in Berlin, the Senate has deported thousands of refugees. The Social Democratic interior minister has proved to be particularly aggressive. He has not only carried out mass deportations, but is also responsible for the inhumane conditions in the Köpenick detention centre, which led to hunger strikes by inmates in 2002, 2003 and 2005.

Moreover, the Berlin Senate has vastly extended the powers of the police. Not only have more CCTV cameras been installed in public places, but the security agencies have been given permission to directly access the countless cameras of the Berlin Transport Authority (BVG), without any concrete suspicion.

Furthermore, private security services have been used in Berlin’s police work, not only increasing staff

numbers but also exempting them from legal scrutiny. The right to demonstrate has been restricted.

The SPD-Left Party Senate is not alone in disseminating right-wing ideology and policies. Sarrazin's diatribe was well received by most of the media, and the author was given a platform on countless talk shows and interviews.

It should also be recalled that the Supreme Court rejected a case to ban the far-right German National Party (NPD) in 2003, on the grounds that it was an "affair of state". During the proceedings, it emerged that at least one in seven functionaries in this neo-fascist group was on the payroll of the secret service. In addition, the party receives millions each year in state election campaign support.

In other European countries like Hungary, Italy and the Netherlands, right-wing extremist organizations are already involved directly or indirectly in government, where they employ their racist demagoguery to enforce the austerity policies of the elite.

The reason for the stirring up of anti-Islamism and racism, and the shift to the right by all the establishment parties and political formations that defend the profit system, lies in growing social inequality and the crisis of capitalism. The dictates of the banks, with one government after another pledged to destroy all remaining social gains, cannot be reconciled with democratic rights for the population. As in Britain, the ruling elite everywhere will act with boundless brutality against those who seek to oppose social inequality.

Conversely, the Egyptian revolution has shown how quickly ethnic and religious tensions can dissipate and reactionary ideologies lose ground when the workers begin to intervene in their masses into the political process. To the extent that they are held back and sabotaged by bourgeois parties and the trade unions, a breeding ground is prepared for the far right.

The struggle against the neo-fascists is therefore inextricably linked to the struggle against the dictatorship of the banks and their supporters in politics and media. Calls for the "unity of all democrats against the right" only serve to conceal the right-wing policies of the SPD, Greens and the Left Party; in order to defeat the right wing a mass working-class movement against the Senate is needed. Such a mass movement must unite workers regardless of race, colour or

religion against the austerity policies.

This requires the building of a party that is opposed to the dictates of the banks and which organizes workers on the basis of a socialist perspective. The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party, PSG) is participating in the Berlin elections to build precisely such a party. We call on all those attending today's demonstration to make contact with the PSG and its youth organization, the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE), read our daily publication on the Internet, the *World Socialist Web Site*, and vote PSG on 18 September.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact