

Berlin: The Left Party and the fake left SAV group

Lucas Adler
4 October 2011

After 10 years of ruling Berlin in a coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), during which they carried out an unprecedented orgy of social spending cuts, the Left Party was voted out of office on September 18. The people of Berlin have learned the lesson after a decade of “red-red” politics. There is little difference between an administration composed of the SPD and the Left Party and that of any other grouping of bourgeois political parties.

Participation by the Left Party in the Berlin city-state parliament became necessary 10 years ago in order to stabilise the political status quo following the banking scandal that developed under the previous “grand coalition” of the conservative Christian Democratic Union and the SPD. The SPD-Left Party coalition went on to implement a programme of spending cuts that no other party would have been able to do at that time. Only the Left Party—like a wolf in sheep’s clothing—was in the position to push through the hitherto unparalleled attacks on the social fabric in Berlin, whilst at the same time undertaking to control and divert resistance to these assaults, thanks to their close collaboration with the trade union leaders.

This policies of the Left Party were also consistently supported by fake left groups, like the Socialist Alternative group (SAV, affiliated to the Militant Tendency), which worked diligently to cover up every right-wing policy statement announced by the Left Party with a smokescreen of leftist slogans and illusions. The aim of such groups is to block the development of any independent opposition to the social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies and to prevent any movement in the working class that seeks to break out of their control. As the crisis of capitalism intensifies, these groups are cuddling up ever more closely to the Left Party and accompanying them in their further lurch to the right.

In 2008, after the eruption of the worldwide financial crisis, the Left Party signaled its support for the bank rescue package—the pouring of billions of euros of public money into the pockets of the banks. It was at this point that the SAV decided to join the Left Party.

Thereafter, they campaigned for two years for the right of

all their members to join the Left Party, with the aim of giving the party a “left makeover” from the inside. Whereas, five years ago the SAV had at least rhetorically expressed their opposition to the Left Party’s policies. Their members are now those who organised the recent election campaign for the Left Party. This does not seem to have impressed the voters in the slightest.

During their first five years in the ruling “red-red” coalition, the Left Party had already lost massive numbers of supporters. In the 2001 election, the Left Party (at that time standing as the PDS) was able to win 366,292 votes (22.6 percent); in 2006 they only gained 185,185 votes (13.4 percent).

However, despite the fact that the SAV has since merged with the Left Party, the latter has lost even more votes. In the recent city elections, the party received just 170,829 votes (11.7 percent).

The slump in support for the Left Party should be welcomed without reservations. It is the expression of a political disillusionment, which is absolutely necessary to prepare the working class for the coming struggles. The SAV, on the other hand, is reacting with alarm at the defeat of its party and is intensifying its attempts to present itself as a viable alternative to the official political establishment.

On September 21, the SAV published an article on their web site that analyses the recent Berlin election results. In this article, they have to concede that the reason for the electoral failure of the Left Party was their socially destructive policies. Nevertheless, they continue to call for further support for building up this very party.

“The economically, active young people and the unemployed must prepare themselves for hard times ahead”, writes the SAV. “They need genuine defenders of their interests, which the Left Party in Berlin does not, at the moment, represent. So it lies with us to campaign in the party for a radical new programme, to stop working with the pro-capitalist parties in the coalition and work instead with the Left Party on the side of the economically active, young people and the unemployed against the effects of the crisis,

the worsening of living standards and in favour of a socialist society”.

In other words: The Left Party must do a U-turn. The pro-capitalist party, which has operated for 10 years against the interests of the economically active, young people and the unemployed, and has drastically worsened their living standards, is now supposed to be transformed into a party that fights for a socialist society. Whereas, the working class, especially in Berlin, have correctly recognised this party as its political enemy, the SAV are earnestly calling for them to join this very party, and place new hopes in it.

This is no accident. They are deliberately acting against the left-wing development in the working class, who are seeking genuine political alternatives in the face of the economic crisis, social austerity measures and war. They are seeking to bring such workers back into the “sheep pen” of the old bureaucratic structures and established political order. And this is by no means a process exclusive to Berlin.

In order to carry through the social counterrevolution that the financial aristocracy insist must be imposed throughout Europe, there is currently open discussion in Germany about the need for a new SPD-Green replacement for the failing conservative Merkel regime; a replacement that could more effectively overcome the resistance of the working class. Such a government would be more in a position, thanks to its close ties with the trade union bureaucracy and leading industrial representatives, to more successfully implement brutal austerity measures.

Just as before, under the first SPD-Green government, a supposedly left alternative would be needed, in order to head off the opposition of the working class to such policies. For this reason, the Left Party project was ultimately brought to life by influential representatives of the political establishment. In any case, this project is already going through a deep crisis, because it had too quickly shown its true political colours. The SAV now see as its task to breathe new life into “the project”.

By doing so, it is also preparing for the possible entry of the Left Party into a future government. Of interest in this regard, the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* published on its web site a favourable “obituary” of the newly ousted “red-red” Berlin regime on September 18—just a few hours after the results had become clear.

This article, titled “Red-red was good for ten years”, leads off with a summary of the devastating social spending cuts made by the SPD/Left Party coalition in the Berlin Senate, and then comments: “This was not socialism. Indeed, it was sometimes hard to believe that these austerity measures were actually being implemented by the social democrats and a socialist party”. The article nevertheless concludes by praising the coalition for showing through their policies their

“grip on the major tasks”.

“That is the achievement of the red-red coalition. This was indeed probably the only imaginable way that such spending cuts could have been pushed through and adhered to. Every other political constellation would have inevitably had to face repeated protests and demonstrations by those affected by the cuts. The Left Party in opposition had already made sure of that. But with them in power, the austerity measures have been implemented relatively peacefully. ‘Peace’, in any case, is an appropriate label for this coalition, which has proved that it is possible to have governments that function without causing conflict”.

These sentences read like an employer’s testimony or reference that the Left Party can use to apply for a position in the national government to carry out further social attacks. The SAV would have the job in such a constellation of kicking sand into the faces of the working class, to blind them long enough to remain passive until the bourgeoisie have managed to stick a dagger through their ribs.

Given this perspective, the lessons gained from the Berlin experience are essential for the imminent class struggles. Only through a determined fight against the Left Party and their pseudo-left supporters can the interests of the workers be genuinely represented. That is the significance of the election campaign of the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG), whose candidates were the only political force to oppose from the left the socially devastating policies carried out by the “red-red” regime.

The PSG election campaign was directed against the politics of the Left Party, the SAV and similar fake-left tendencies throughout Europe. It made a valuable contribution to the clarification of a revolutionary perspective, drawing the line between the latter and the pseudo-left quagmire that seeks all over Europe to disable resistance to the social counterrevolution now taking place. By drawing this line, important foundations have been laid for the independent movement of the working class, foundations that will be of decisive importance in the coming class struggles.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact