

All-party alliance dominates German election campaign

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Four weeks before the German federal election on September 22, the country's main political parties are closing ranks. Instead of a debate on program or political controversies, all of the parties represented in parliament are mutually assuring their agreement on all major issues and their readiness to form a coalition with just about anybody.

This all-party alliance effectively robs voters of any opportunity to influence the future government. No matter which party achieves a majority, the agenda and program of the future government have already been determined by the major banks and corporations. The main lines of the new government's program have already been drawn up. On the agenda are massive social cuts and the restriction of democratic rights, but no mention of these themes is made during the campaign. The election increasingly assumes the form of a conspiracy against the people.

Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) has declared her interest in a renewed coalition with the Free Democratic Party (FDP), but at the same time "clearly recalls" her collaboration with former finance minister Peer Steinbrück, the lead candidate of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD). Merkel has made clear that she does not exclude the possibility of a new grand coalition.

The chairman of the SPD, Sigmar Gabriel, has met Merkel half way by dropping the only demand—higher taxes for high earners—by which the Social Democrats sought to differentiate themselves from Merkel's Christian Democrats and the FDP. At the same time the party has sent former SPD chancellor Gerhard Schröder on the campaign trail. Schröder held a rally in Detmold last week, appearing beside ex-SPD leader Franz Müntefering and Steinbrück, in what amounted to blatant promotion of Schröder's anti-social policy, the

Hartz laws and Agenda 2010.

At the start of this year Schröder, Müntefering, Steinbrück and Gabriel used the tenth anniversary of the Hartz laws to call for a new Agenda 2020. Germany could only defend its lead over emerging economic powers such as Brazil and China, former chancellor Schröder stressed at the time, "If we work hard on our competitiveness."

The Greens have responded to the closing of ranks between the SPD and CDU by stating that they are also ready to form an alliance with the Christian Democrats. In last week's edition of *Der Spiegel*, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Green Party European parliamentary deputy, announced it was high time to seriously consider a coalition with the conservatives at a federal level.

In his typically provocative and reactionary fashion, Cohn-Bendit offered the services of the Greens as coalition partners in order to prepare for the "withdrawal from industrialism", via mass layoffs and plant closings, while smashing up what remains of the welfare state under the slogan: "More autonomy and self-responsibility for citizens."

Cohn-Bendit criticizes the fact that remnants of the coal and steel industry are still active in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, and poses as an alternative his so-called "citizen's autonomy and self-help"—best achieved in an alliance with the CDU. In addition, such a coalition provides "hope of departing from an industrialism which brought economic growth at the cost of growing indebtedness and the destruction of nature."

The Left Party is also involved in this all-party alliance. It is drawn by the right-wing turn of the SPD and the Greens and is ready to provide a left cover for such a development. When former SPD interior minister Otto Schily defended the German secret

service following the revelations of Edward Snowden and declared law and order to be core social democratic values, Left Party leader Gregor Gysi responded with a renewed offer to cooperate. Gysi declared that the SPD could only implement its program with the support of the Left Party.

The closing of ranks between all parties is above all a response to the rapid worsening of the economic and social crisis, and preparation by the ruling class for impending class struggles.

So far, the German government—supported by the SPD, Greens and Left Party—has shifted the main burden of the financial and economic crisis to southern Europe, triggering an unprecedented social disaster in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Now the major banks and business associations are demanding a new round of social attacks in Germany, attacks that go far beyond those involved in the SPD-Green Agenda 2010.

This places huge class struggles on the agenda. The events in Egypt are of great importance in this context. The uprising of Egyptian workers who overthrew dictator Hosni Mubarak in early 2011 unleashed a state of shock in Western capitals. Since then the question has been discussed in political circles and editorial offices: Could such a development also take place here?

The Left Party has directly addressed this issue and placed rejection of revolution at the heart of its campaign. Its main election poster features the word “Revolution?” in large letters with a categorical “No” printed underneath. There then follows a series of demands such as a minimum wage, minimum pension and limits to rent increases that are presented as an alternative to revolution.

The poster is not aimed at voters. Instead, the Left Party is appealing to the ruling class, to the effect: “If you want to prevent a revolution, then you need us. We, the Left Party, are experts when it comes to counterrevolution and preventing the overthrow of capitalism.”

During the period of capitalist reunification over two decades ago, the forerunner of the Left Party, the Party of Democratic Socialism (SED), played a key role in demobilising mass protests that could have assumed revolutionary dimensions. It was the Stalinist SED/PDS government led by Hans Modrow that paved the way for Western banks and corporations to set up in former East Germany.

With its anti-revolution poster the Left Party makes clear to everyone where it stands, i.e., foursquare with the German ruling class.

Many workers react with hostility to the manner in which all German parties are closing ranks in the election campaign. But it is not enough to turn away from official politics. It is necessary to prepare for coming class struggles. Workers must draw their own conclusions from the dramatic events in Egypt, which graphically reveal the necessity for a socialist program and a revolutionary leadership.

More than two years after the uprising against the Mubarak dictatorship the military is trying to turn back the clock with bloody violence. In this process, liberal and pseudo-left forces, which openly support military force, play a key role. In Egypt, as in Europe, workers need their own party in order to prepare for the coming class struggles. This is the goal of the election campaign of the SEP in Germany, the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG).



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