

Left Party advocates joint candidate with SPD and Greens for German presidency

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The Left Party has responded to the announcement by federal President Joachim Gauck that he will be retiring next year on age grounds “by moving further to the right. Over the past days, one party leader after another has demanded that the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens—parties responsible for the Hartz IV welfare “reforms” and for taking Germany to war—stand a joint candidate in the next federal presidential elections in Spring 2017.

On Tuesday last week, Left Party parliamentary leader Sarah Wagenknecht declared in a press statement, “We wish the SPD had the courage to slip the embrace of the grand coalition and not only put forward a joint candidate with us and the Greens, but also carry it through.”

The co-chairs of the Left Party, Katja Kipping and Bernd Riexinger, on hearing of Gauck’s official announcement on Monday, immediately invited the SPD and Greens for talks. In a joint press statement, they declared their “respect for the decision of Joachim Gauck.” Now, “the time for talks had dawned,” and the Left Party is ready to “reach an understanding with the SPD and the Greens on a common candidacy.”

Representatives of various party tendencies and the party press are singing from the same hymn book. Dominik Heilig, spokesman for the right-wing Forum for Democratic Socialism, pleaded that the “Pirates and the South Schleswig Voters Union” be included in the search for candidates alongside the SPD and Greens. Alban Werner of the Socialist Left, in which the pseudo-left Marx21 sets the tone, described it as “ideal” if the SPD-Left Party made “a good personnel proposal” that is also “acceptable” to the Left Party and the Greens.

The Left Party’s campaign is not limited to a common presidential candidate. Its advances towards the SPD and Greens also serve to prepare a possible

SPD-Left Party-Green (so-called red-red-green) government at the federal level.

Historically, the presidential elections has often functioned as a precursor to subsequent government alliances. For example, in March 1969 Gustav Heinemann was elected with the votes of the SPD and Free Democratic Party (FDP) as the third president of post-war Germany. This was followed in the autumn of the same year by the SPD-FDP coalition with Willy Brandt (SPD) as Chancellor. In 2012, Gauck went into the race as a joint candidate of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), SPD and Greens. A year later, the SPD/CDU/CSU grand coalition was formed.

In a commentary entitled “Who follows Gauck?,” Benjamin Hoff, the culture minister in the Thuringia state coalition government led by the Left Party, together with the SPD and Greens, formulated the strategic game plan of the Left Party. The SPD must “use the presidential election in 2017 to make a political statement of its own creative power against the CDU/CSU. This would be a legitimizing tailwind for an SPD chancellor candidate ...”

“On the way to the general election in 2017, after the stops in Berlin and Mecklenburg Pomerania, and in preparation for the proposed exploratory talks on the resumption of a red-green-red government in North Rhine-Westfalia,” the Left Party would gain “the opportunity to take a formative influence on federal policy in a very clear manner.” In addition, it could “provide a leap of faith to punish all those lies that already hold a red-green-red coalition to be illusory.”

At the end of his commentary, Hoff outlined clearly the political and social developments to which the Left Party was reacting with its call for greater “formative influence on federal policy.” A joint presidential

candidate “could and should in times of populism from the right; the fear of failing by wide sections of the middle class; the challenge posed by the integration of refugees and the need to ideally newly justify European integration, stand for the courage to say what is.”

To put it bluntly: Under conditions of growing opposition to social inequality, the decline of the establishment parties and the breaking apart of the European Union, the Left Party sees its task as taking on government responsibility at federal level in order to stabilise bourgeois rule and suppress an independent movement of the working class against capitalism.

As always, Wagenknecht, Kipping, Hoff and Co. embellish their government offensive with a few “left” phrases, but the actual role of a red-red-green coalition has long been known.

In Berlin, the Left Party created a social disaster, ruling from 2001 to 2011 together with the SPD. In Thuringia, the Ramelow state administration is already implementing the reactionary policies of the federal government. This includes extremely business-friendly policies (Ramelow brags of being more “investor-friendly” than the CDU), the brutal deportation of refugees and the open propagation of German militarism. Significantly, a Leopard battle tank was presented to the public outside Erfurt Cathedral Square in the state capital on Friday’s “Day of the Armed Forces.” This was certainly done to the satisfaction of Gauck, whom the Left Party now wants to replace with a red-red-green successor.



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