

“Stand Up against Racism”: A right-wing alliance in support of an SPD/Left Party/Green coalition government

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A few thousand demonstrators gathered last Saturday at Adenauerplatz in Berlin to drum up support for a Social Democrat/Left Party/Green coalition government. Although the demonstration took place under cover of the name “Stand Up against Racism,” the disgusting spectacle in the posh district in the west of the capital city had nothing to do with a struggle against racism and right-wing extremism.

Gathered together were the very political parties, groups and trade unions that bear responsibility for the current drift to the right, and are preparing to shift their political coordinates even further right in the wake of the upcoming election to the Berlin state House of Representatives on September 18 and the federal elections due next year.

The protest march made its way from Adenauerplatz across the Kurfürstendamm, took a detour to pass the headquarters of the ultra-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), and ended at the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) headquarters on Lützowplatz. For his part, state senator for interior affairs Frank Henkel (CDU) seized the opportunity to put his law-and-order election campaign into practice. He ordered over 1,000 police officers from Berlin and other states to mobilise en masse in the city centre and conduct strict checks on bags.

The Friends of Nature Association, which is part of the “Stand Up against Racism” coalition, and registered the demonstration, called on “all people, civil society actors and alliances, trade unions, youth organisations, creators of culture, religious communities and parties” to take part. According to media reports, 10,000 people had been expected but only 3,000 turned out. The figure of 6,000 provided by the organisers was clearly exaggerated.

The nationwide alliance “Stand Up against Racism” was founded in mid March after the right-wing extremist AfD achieved some success in a number of state elections. In its statement, the alliance declared, “Wherever the racists from the AfD and co. demonstrate, speak or seek to win votes, we will be present to clearly and decisively state: we are standing up against racism! No votes for right-wing agitators!”

The list of over 200 people who signed the statement reads like a who’s who of the political establishment around the SPD, Left Party, the Greens and trade unions. In April, they met in Frankfurt for a so-called conference of action against racism, which the *World Socialist Web Site* characterised as a cynical fraud.

Saturday’s demonstration was a continuation of this manoeuvre. Under the cover of a struggle against the right, a new governing coalition is being propagated to proceed with the attacks on refugees and democratic rights and the involvement of the German army in

imperialist wars abroad even more decisively than the current grand coalition of the CDU/CSU/SPD in the federal government.

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party–PSG) is the only party standing in the Berlin state elections for a socialist perspective. The PSG warns in its election statement on the danger of an SPD/Left Party/Green coalition, whether in Berlin state or nationally:

“The Berlin election is seen as a trial run in laying the foundations for an SPD-Left Party-Green coalition at the federal level, a so-called red-red-green government. Such an administration would not represent progress. In 1998, the SPD and Greens formed a coalition, which sent the Bundeswehr on foreign combat missions for the first time since World War II, and cut wages and benefits. Now this alliance is to be revived using the Left Party in order to impose the next round of social cuts and pave the way for further German militarism.

“Together, the right-wing policies of the SPD and the Left Party have facilitated the rise of the AfD. This ultra-right party is only able to present itself as a social opposition because of the absence of an opposition from the left. It exploits anger and disappointment with the broken campaign promises of the SPD and the Left Party for its own reactionary purposes. Marine Le Pen in France and Donald Trump in the US function in a similar manner. Those who want to fight the AfD must break with the SPD and the Left Party.”

The entire character of the demonstration confirms this analysis. It took place a day prior to the state elections in Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania, where the AfD secured over 20 percent in its first election in the state and finished in second place behind the SPD. In the campaign, all of the establishment parties sought to outdo each other with xenophobic electioneering.

The social milieu at the demonstration corresponded to the rotten political programme of the organisations represented. They speak on behalf of privileged sections of the middle class and the pseudo-radical petty bourgeoisie, who themselves intend to profit from a change in government. Among the waving flags of the established parties sat some people drinking beer, while representatives of the Pirate Party, the Antifascist Action (Antifa), the Stalinist German Communist Party (DKP) and all sorts of pseudo-left organisations mingled. Everyone was among friends. Hardly a single worker, public sector employee or youth concerned by the strengthening of far right tendencies in Germany found their way there.

The fact that the rally found no resonance among the working class does not express broad support for right-wing or racist positions. The

abandonment of the political establishment by the working class is much more the expression of growing anti-capitalist sentiments. An increasing number of workers and young people recognise that the establishment parties do not represent their interests, let alone organisations of struggle to combat the far right.

Speakers at the rally included representatives from the three parties—SPD, Left Party and Greens—figures from the Blockupy movement, the Ver.di trade union, the globalisation critics of Attac and other groups. Most contributions were reduced to empty phrases about conditions confronting refugees and superficial slogans against the racism and sexism of the AfD.

The timid criticisms made of the refugee policies of the parties present by a few speakers were grotesque in the context of an event promoting an SPD/Left Party/Green coalition. International political questions like the war in Syria or the rightward shift in other European countries were hardly touched upon.

The candidates for the Berlin state House of Representatives, Susanne Kitschun (SPD), Elke Breitenbach (Left Party) and Clara Hermann (Greens), appeared together on the podium and showed their unity. All three know the swamp of Berlin state politics very well. Kitschun was elected to the House of Representatives in 2006 after five years in local politics in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, thus making her responsible for the social attacks of the SPD/Left Party state government.

Since 2011, she has served as deputy chairwoman of the parliamentary group of the Berlin SPD. The young Green candidate Hermann has also been in the House of Representatives since 2006.

The third candidate in the alliance, Elke Breitenbach, has sat as a Left Party (and its predecessor PDS) deputy since 2003. She was therefore fully involved in the policies pursued by the SPD/Left Party Berlin state government, which ruled in the capital from 2002 to 2011 and organised an unprecedented assault on social conditions. Breitenbach is deputy chairwoman of the Berlin Left Party and is among those who would also like to see the CDU joining in the “struggle” against racism.

As the Left Party’s representative, Breitenbach signed the so-called “Berlin consensus” in July, a “public statement of Berlin’s democratic parties, SPD, CDU, the Greens, Left Party, Pirate Party and FDP.” The paper, which was signed by Berlin mayor Michael Müller (SPD) and the rightward-leaning justice senator Thomas Heilmann (CDU) among others, began with a cynical lie, “In recent years, Berlin has accepted tens of thousands of people fleeing war and persecution with a lot of engagement.”

In fact, the Berlin Senate, with the support of the parties who signed the statement, has confined refugees to mass accommodation centres and restricted the right to asylum so as to be able to deport people as quickly as possible. “A lot of engagement” was not shown by the parties, but by the population, who intervened to support the refugees!

The statement goes on to assert that it is a “long tradition in Berlin for democratic parties to stand together against right-wing extremism, right-wing populism, anti-Semitism and racism,” while claiming that “joint action” against right-wing extremism had been agreed.

Behind the “Berlin consensus” against the right is in reality a right-wing consensus of all bourgeois parties, including the Left Party, that in the face of mounting social inequality it is necessary for the established parties to draw closer together in opposition to the working class.

At the rally, the representatives of the SPD, Left Party and Greens then promoted a “Red/Red/Green” coalition government with all

manner of vague phrases. Kitschun described an alliance between all three parties as “a nice option.” Breitenbach stated, “A new coalition can and must create policies which preserve the diversity and colourful character of this city and place the question of social justice at the centre.” In front of the stage, party colleagues Petra Pau and Klaus Lederer nodded politely.

In the current political situation, the Left Party is playing a critical role for the German bourgeoisie. They raise “questions of social justice” and employ anti-war slogans so as to misdirect and confuse workers angered by the policies of the establishment parties. At the same time, the Left Party is giving up its pseudo-left mask and offering its services openly to the other parties as a partner in domestic and foreign policy.

The election campaign of the Berlin Left Party is characterised by this double function. While the Left Party raises some social demands in sections of its election programme, it calls a few pages later for the buildup of the police and security forces.

In the section “More security personnel instead of more video surveillance,” it states, “Only people can intervene in critical situations.” The Left Party therefore proposes, “to ensure additional personnel, particularly on buses and trains as well as train stations for public transport.” A “strong training and equipping of the police” is required, and “the working conditions of police officers” must be improved and more personnel hired.

The Left Party’s former parliamentary group chairman Gregor Gysi closed his speech at a party rally held at Hermannplatz prior to the demonstration with a call for more police. Along with the call for an SPD/Left Party/Green alliance, the speech contained the demand for a more aggressive and independent foreign policy to secure Germany’s own imperialist interests, particularly against the United States.

The rapid rightward development of the Left Party on the issues of war and refugee policy is provoking unease among the ranks of the pseudo-left groups desperately seeking to portray the Left Party as an “anti-capitalist” or even “revolutionary” party. Some “antifa” groups and the pseudo-Trotskyist RIO group therefore found themselves compelled to focus not only on the “racism of the AfD,” but also the “racism of the CDU/SPD/Greens/Left Party.” Their simple slogan was “Struggle now!”

This general call to “struggle” is not aimed at building a revolutionary party of the working class. Instead, it is an invitation to supposedly left-wing tendencies within the Left Party and trade union bureaucracy to carry out even closer political cooperation. In its statement on the Berlin elections, RIO calls for the building of an “anti-capitalist left front.”

Just how broad this front is has been made clear by RIO in other articles. In a contribution for the *Neues Deutschland* newspaper, which is aligned to the Left Party, RIO member Wladek Flakin named SPD Deputy Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel and family minister Manuela Schwesig as potential figures for “joint actions.”



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