

SPD, Left Party and Greens commence coalition talks after Berlin election

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Following exploratory talks on Monday, representatives of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Left Party and the Greens announced that they would quickly commence coalition negotiations in Berlin. In the next few days the appropriate party committees will decide whether to negotiate the formation of a “red-red-green Senate” in Berlin. Coalition negotiations are then due to start in the middle of next week.

The exploratory discussion lasted just four and a half hours. Afterwards the party representatives declared that the negotiations had proceeded so well that any further meeting was unnecessary. “We noted many, many similarities,” Green Party representative Ramona Pop told local media. The state head of the Left Party Klaus Lederer also appeared cheerful and satisfied: “There were very serious and intensive discussions on the priorities needed to get the city back on its feet,” he said.

The harmony between the three parties speaks volumes about the character of a red-red-green Senate. In the Berlin Senate election two weeks ago, voters punished the SPD and its reigning Mayor Michael Müller, with the SPD recording its worst-ever election result. Now the Left Party and the Greens are stepping up to the plate in order to keep Müller in office.

The task of a red-red-green coalition will be to step up the right-wing policies of boosting state powers, attacking refugees and slashing social programs. In so doing the SPD and Left Party can draw directly from their past cooperation. During its period in office from 2002 to 2011, the former SPD-Left Party Senate implemented massive social attacks surpassing by far those carried out by conservative state governments.

The ostentatious display of harmony has a clear political content: All three parties are for fiscal

consolidation, accept the debt ceiling, seek more and better equipped police and are seeking to make all social expenditure dependent on budgetary considerations.

The harmony in Berlin sets the stage for a red-red-green government at a federal level. In recent weeks, representatives of the Left Party and the SPD in particular had signaled their willingness to cooperate. On Sunday, the former leader of the Left Party, Gregor Gysi, stated that he was ready to stand again as a candidate for the Bundestag in 2017 “if really serious changes came about.”

A meeting of 30 representatives of the three parliamentary groups is planned for 18 October, under the title “Dialog for a progressive policy.” Due to take part in the meeting, organized by the vice-faction leaders Axel Schäfer (SPD), Caren Lay (Left Party) and Katja Dörner (Green Party), are representatives from the SPD’s network wing and its right-wing Seeheim Circle. The introductory report is to be given by the social philosopher Oskar Negt who was a member of the advisory board of the former SPD-Green government.

The event is a prelude for further discussion. “We want to raise the red-red-green dialogue to a higher level,” said one of the organizers. In addition, numerous initiatives are being organised by smaller networks. The SPD deputy Frank Schwabe has invited representatives of the Left Party and the Greens to a debate on pension policy on October 19. And a discussion between SPD General Secretary Katarina Barley, Green Party leader Anton Hofreiter and Left Party leader Dietmar Bartscht is scheduled for late November, organised by the Forum of Democratic Socialism (fds) - run by the Left Party.

A coalition between the SPD, Left Party and Greens,

which would have had a majority in the past two Senates, is now being favoured by the ruling elite as social tensions and conflicts between the great powers mount.

The ongoing crisis of Deutsche Bank and the entire Italian banking system is the prelude to a new international financial crisis. While governments prepare for fierce social attacks on the living standards of working people, the EU threatens to break up as nationalism grows. At the same time all of the major imperialist powers are rearming.

Under these conditions, a “red-red-green” government in collaboration with the unions and petty-bourgeois organizations is to be empowered to enforce militarism and social cuts. It would play a similar role to that of the former federal SPD-Green Party government and the SPD-Left coalition in the Berlin Senate, but under conditions of a much deeper crisis.

In the past few days, representatives of the Left Party have revealed the basic orientation of a red-red-green government. In an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* the party’s parliamentary leader in the Bundestag, Sahra Wagenknecht, pleaded for more state powers. In its recent election campaign in Berlin, the Left Party had already demanded more powers and manpower for the police.

Wagenknecht declared: “We have always criticized cuts in police personnel. We are not the party of the weak state but want a state well-equipped to fulfil its tasks. This includes ensuring the security of its citizens.”

Such a strengthening of the state apparatus is aimed at suppressing social discontent, protests and the broad based opposition to war. The unity on this issue amongst the Left Party, Greens and SPD points to the right-wing character of a coalition of these parties.

This was made clear in a speech by former Left Party leader Gregor Gysi at a recent party congress, in which he discussed how to bail out the EU’s banks and corporations. Against a background of widespread hostility to the anti-social EU and growing national conflicts, Gysi spoke out in favour of preserving EU treaties in order to enforce German great power politics.

“If we return to the old nation states,” he said, “then these nation states will lose out economically ... In relation to the United States, to China, to Japan.”

This aggressive policy to dominate Europe in order to enforce German interests around the world is increasingly assuming military forms. German soldiers are already stationed in Iraq, Syria and Mali and have recently moved to the Russian border. The Ministry of Defence has announced an increase in military spending of 130 billion euros.

Gysi has often said that a Left Party in government would support Bundeswehr operations. Now he has the backing of Wagenknecht in an interview with *Die Zeit*. In the interview she explained that one must negotiate foreign military missions in coalition talks.

There can be no doubt that a red-red-green government would take over where its red-green predecessor left off. It will press ahead with the revival of German militarism and enforce fierce social attacks. Berlin is to be the test case for such a policy.



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