

Plans take shape for red-red-green federal coalition in Germany

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With coalition talks in full swing between the Social Democrats (SPD), Left Party and Greens in Berlin over a potential coalition to form the next state government, plans are being initiated to establish a red-red-green coalition at the federal level.

Twelve months ahead of the federal election, 90 high-ranking representatives of the three parties from all 16 states met in the SPD's parliamentary group room at the Bundestag (federal parliament). The meeting was initiated by several deputy parliamentary group chairs from the three parties, who have already been discussing the possibility of a red-red-green federal government behind the scenes for some time.

Under conditions of deepening economic and political crisis, sections of the ruling elite see such a coalition as a good option to enforce the programme of social cuts and the strengthening of the internal and external state apparatus in the face of popular opposition. The daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* remarked, "Red-red-green could offer a perspective for power. It is at least much more promising than any other option."

After the meeting, leading representatives from all parties spoke positively about a joint government. SPD deputy parliamentary group chair Axel Schäfer said, "There is a need to talk. And there is a readiness to assume joint responsibility in the future. That also means: government responsibility."

Left Party parliamentary group chair Dietmar Bartsch stated that there was a growing readiness among all three parties for a coalition: "I detect a significant change in the SPD, the Greens and with us which could make a three-party coalition possible: the will to do so."

SPD leader and deputy chancellor Sigmar Gabriel made a surprise appearance at the meeting. He listened to the opening remarks from Oscar Negt before meeting with some of those present in a smaller group.

Negt, a social philosopher and pupil of Theodor

Adorno, previously played an important role in the SPD-Green coalition under Schröder and Fischer, which governed from 1998 to 2005, sending German troops on their first foreign interventions since World War II and launching major attacks on the working class with the Hartz welfare reforms.

Negt told an interview with the newspapers of RedaktionsNetzwerk Deutschland that the SPD and Greens faced an historic test of strength: "If it goes wrong, it will be a catastrophe."

He criticised the grand coalition of Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and the SPD for being "always focused on the short-term successes at elections." There was "a lack of direction." As a result, "a point has been reached in Germany for the first time since 1945 in which the danger of Weimar is there once again." In this situation, "only assistance from the cooperative Left Party ... is capable of preventing the collapse of democratic institutions."

In other words: a red-red-green government would have the task of suppressing the class struggle, strengthening the state apparatus and continuing the previous SPD-Green government's policies of austerity and war. It would be no "left" alternative to the grand coalition, but would instead continue and intensify its right-wing policies.

The Left Party is now needed even though the SPD and Greens categorically excluded the possibility of cooperation at the federal level only a short time ago. The Left Party's sister party in Greece, Syriza, has already demonstrated that it is capable of enforcing even more brutal austerity measures against working people than the more established bourgeois parties.

In foreign policy, a red-red-green government would have the task of pushing ahead with the return of German militarism against mounting opposition, and pursuing, increasingly independently from the US, a more

aggressive German foreign policy.

Since Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier proclaimed at the Munich Security Conference in 2014 that Germany had to “be ready to intervene earlier, more decisively and substantially in foreign and security policy,” the SPD has been the main force behind the foreign policy shift. Steinmeier has written articles distancing himself from the US and spoken of “Germany’s new global role.” At the same time, the foreign ministry which he heads has produced strategy papers on the goal of militarising Europe under German leadership.

In a recent essay titled “Europe is the solution,” based on a lecture at the University of Zürich, Steinmeier urged, “We have to give ourselves the instruments required today for a joint foreign policy [of the EU]. This included “practical capabilities: capacities for joint situation analysis, financial resources for stabilisation and crisis management, and ultimately joint military capabilities, like joint commando units or naval task forces.”

These, according to Steinmeier, were “the concrete steps now required.” “The creation of a European army” ought to be discussed “when we have demonstrated that Europe can do it better than any national state alone.”

The role of the Left Party and Greens in a federal government led by the SPD would consist in concealing this militarist programme with rhetoric about “peace,” “democracy” and “human rights,” while suppressing any opposition to it. The former Green pacifists are experts in selling German military interventions as a struggle for humanity or by using cynical references to the historic crimes of German imperialism to justify them.

Since Green leader Joschka Fischer justified the participation in the 1999 Kosovo war with the statement “Never again Auschwitz,” the Greens have supported every German military intervention while in opposition and even attacked the government on foreign policy from the right. Currently, leading Green politicians are urging a harder line towards Russia and support a military intervention in violation of international law in the Middle East.

In an interview with Spiegel Online, Green leader Cem Özdemir demanded the threatening of Syria with a “comprehensive, international no-fly zone,” which should be imposed without a UN mandate if necessary. At the same time, he complained about Germany’s abstention during NATO’s bombardment of Libya in 2011. “I am no radical pacifist,” he said reassuringly. “I continue to think it was a mistake that Germany abstained from the Libya

intervention and I agreed to the military intervention in Afghanistan.”

The Left Party is preparing to play the same role as the Greens did 18 years ago. It is emerging as an openly pro-war party. Over recent weeks, it has been building strong links to the German general staff and signalling to the ruling elite that it is ready to back German militarism. As the first “left” minister president in Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow, stated in *Der Spiegel*, the Left Party is “not pacifist.” Sahra Wagenknecht declared during ZDF’s summer interview, “Germany will of course not leave NATO the day we enter government.”

The Left Party was fully integrated into the foreign policy shift from the outset. Stefan Liebich, the party’s representative on the Bundestag’s foreign affairs committee, was among the 50 politicians, journalists, academics, military figures and business representatives who produced the strategy paper “New power—new responsibility,” under the direction of the government-aligned German Institute for Foreign Affairs (SWP) and Washington-based German Marshall Fund think tank. The paper served as the basis of Steinmeier’s speech at the Munich Security Conference.

The Left Party also participated in the drafting of the “White Paper 2016 on security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr,” which is the government’s official foreign policy doctrine and calls for, among other things, the deployment of the German army domestically, the launching of military interventions with increased independence from Germany’s post-war allies and a major strengthening of the army.

On the defence ministry’s official web site on the white paper, a statement from the Left Party is prominently placed which says, “The defence minister encouraged a broad discussion within society about this. The Left Party city group in Strausberg welcomes this proposal and invited representatives of the BNVg [defence ministry] as well as all local parties and social organisations to consultations. From the group of those responsible for the written drafting of the white paper, Colonel Just provided information about the time scale of the work.”



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