

# Berlin: Red-red-green coalition to strengthen police

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Talks are currently ongoing in Berlin's city hall on a prospective red-red-green (Left Party—Social Democratic Party (SPD)—Green Party) state government. This week saw discussions on public security and administration. Initial information about the content of the discussions confirms that the strengthening of the state apparatus and police will continue and even be intensified under red-red-green.

The newsletter from the state Left Party reported on Thursday that representatives from the SPD, Left Party and Greens met “on Monday” for their tenth round of talks to discuss “the range of issues of ‘public security and civil rights’.” The “measures” which were agreed for “the domestic sphere,” read like a wish list from the police presidium.

Among other things, it called for “better accessibility and a stronger police presence in residential areas” to be established and a “guard unit” created for central Berlin. “Vacant positions by the police” ought to be “filled as soon as possible,” and “well-qualified training and continuous career development secured.” In addition, “a head office for cooperation between police, fire brigade and rescue workers ... should be established and ... a plan developed for a disaster response command centre.” “The employment of intelligence operatives by the police” is to be permitted “in appropriate emergency situations.”

The Left Party and Greens already made clear during the election campaign that they supported in all essentials the law-and-order agenda of the grand coalition and intended to continue it. The Greens campaigned with their own security plan, which included 500 additional police officers and the legal regulation of the right of an officer to fire their weapon as a last resort, which remains illegal in the state of Berlin.

The Left Party also called in its election programme for more police officers. “Particularly on buses and trains, as well as train stations in public transport” they would “ensure security with additional personnel,” it stated. Under the section “Improve the working conditions of the police,” it added, “The basis upon which the police can fulfil their task responsibly is well-funded training and equipping. Therefore ... more police officers must be hired.”

The specific role of the red-red-green coalition consists in justifying the strengthening of the state apparatus with phrases about “civil rights” and “promoting democracy,” as well as claims to be strengthening the rights of women and immigrants. “The coalition intends to increase the share of women and migrants in the police, fire brigade and rescue services,” the Left Party's newsletter states.

The red-red-green propaganda campaign aims to integrate a better-off section of the middle class into its campaign for a stronger state while at the same time concealing its reactionary orientation. The real goal is in fact the suppression of the working class. Red-red-green is arming itself for class battles in the capital, which will only be intensified by social divisions, the refugee crisis and the growth of militarism.

According to a report by the *Berliner Zeitung*, as the red-red-green talks continue special operations units of the police are to receive €6 million in equipment and weaponry over the coming two years. This will include machine guns, top of the range bulletproof vests and protective breathing apparatus.

Armoured vehicles will also soon be driving on Berlin's streets. The bidding process is currently underway for the construction of the so-called Survivor R. The €500,000 vehicles are strongly modelled on the armoured vehicles used in the US to transport SWAT

teams of heavily armed police. Survivor R was developed by the Düsseldorf-based firm Rheinmetall and the Austrian company Achleitner.

The equipment alone makes clear that the police in Berlin are preparing for civil war-type scenarios: “the vehicle provides protection against attacks by machine guns, hand grenades, and nuclear, biological and chemical weapons; a mechanism for firing smoke grenades or tear gas in variable quantities is provided. The installation of a firing unit with two guns is possible, which can be fired and loaded from inside the vehicle.”

Along with the vehicles, the special operations units will receive 100 NP7 pistols. The modern close-range weapons are mainly used by the German army and generally used in attacks on targets within a range of 150 metres. According to the web site of the producer Heckler & Koch, the weapons are a step in the direction of machine guns in comparison to standard pistols and have been developed as “the ideal accompanying weapon for the modern soldier.” Just last summer, interior senator Frank Henkel announced the arming of the Berlin police with Tasers.

The money for the weaponry is to come from the “anti-terrorism package,” which was passed by the House of Representatives in November 2015 in response to the terrorist attacks in Paris. The package contains €33 million in funding. On top of the additional 1,000 positions with the police, fire brigade and rescue services, a 75-man task force for emergency security situations is to be trained.

The package was supported by all parliamentary parties at the time. As a party of government, the SPD supported the measures from the outset, while the Greens attacked the measures from the right. The Greens’ Benedikt Lux accused the interior senator during the December, 10, 2015 debate of being “neither ‘law’ nor ‘order.’” Referring to the lack of practice firing ranges, he asked in irritated fashion, “And you want to protect Berlin from terrorism? Where can the shooting of a terrorist be practiced?”

The Left Party also backed the security buildup. The chairman of the parliamentary group in the House of Representatives, Udo Wolf, responded to the “anti-terrorism package” with the remark that the equipping of the special operations units had already been comprehensively upgraded under the SPD-Left Party

coalition. His colleague, Hakan Tas, called for more money from the government “for the combatting of day-to-day criminality in the city.” He also complained that “shooting practice” for the police had to be abandoned because of a lack of firing ranges.



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