

# German elections: Polls show growing hostility to the Social Democrats and other capitalist parties

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Two months before the Bundestag (federal parliament) elections, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) chancellor candidate, Martin Schulz, is running far behind current Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU). On Wednesday, polling institute Forsa reported that Merkel had been able to extend her lead over Schulz by another point to 30 percent. If the chancellor could be directly elected, 52 percent of all those eligible to vote would cast their ballot for Merkel and only 22 percent for Schulz.

Manfred Güllner, Managing Director of Forsa, said the situation of the SPD was “probably hopeless.” This is putting it kindly. The SPD is rightly hated for implementing the anti-social Agenda 2010 welfare and labour “reforms,” which plunged millions into poverty and created the largest low-wage sector in Europe. Especially in the working class, the SPD has lost almost all support in recent years. According to a recent study by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), only 17 percent of SPD voters are workers. In 2000, it was still 44 percent.

The rejection of the SPD is greatest among young people. Another recent survey by YouGov and the youth magazine *Bravo* shows that only five percent of young people age 14 to 17 feel their concerns are addressed by Schulz. He trails behind Gregor Gysi of the Left Party (six percent) and far behind Merkel (28 percent). None of the respondents would vote for the lead candidates of the Left Party (Dietmar Bartsch) and the Greens (Katrin Göring-Eckardt); the leading candidates of the right-wing extremist Alliance for Germany (AfD), Alice Weidel and Alexander Gauland, would also not get a single vote.

Overall, the results show the yawning chasm between

all the capitalist parties and the vast majority of working people. Merkel heads the polls, but she is anything but popular among those who vote for her. In the eyes of young people she appears traditional, boring and “distant.” Only seven percent of 14 to 17-year-olds describe her as “modern.” One in four young people think that no party represents their interests.

Already in the spring, the survey “Generation what?” by the European Broadcasting Union revealed that the majority of young people reject the right-wing policies of all the establishment parties and were ready to fight against them. For example, 78 per cent of young people in Germany complained that they observed a growing nationalism, which they considered to be a bad thing. More than two-thirds of young people said they were not prepared to fight for Germany in a war. More than half would participate in a “large-scale uprising against those in power.”

Above all, the SPD is reacting to the growing opposition in the population with a law-and-order election campaign. It is attacking Merkel from the right and, along with the Christian Social Union (CSU) and the right-wing fringe of the CDU, is wooing those who voted for the far-right AfD in the last regional elections. This is the only way to understand the reaction of the Social Democrats to the events surrounding the recent G20 summit in Hamburg.

Controlling the state executive in Hamburg together with the Greens, the SPD organized a massive show of police violence against mainly peaceful protests. Then it launched a veritable witch-hunt against the left that appealed openly to fascist elements. The federal Justice Minister, Heiko Maas (SPD), called for the creation of a European “extremist database” for left-wing radicals

and called for a “Rock against the Left” concert. The SPD executive created the term “protest terrorism” to criminalize any resistance to social cuts and imperialist war politics.

Schulz himself was the most aggressive, which is why he is perceived by wide sections of the population as the “greater evil” compared to Merkel. In his election campaign appearances he blathered on about trivializing left-wing violence and claimed that the riots in the Hamburg district of Schanzenviertel, which had been blown out of proportion by the media, showed “traits of terrorism.” Workers and young people understand very well that Schulz’s repulsive public appearances and clamour are directed against them. His nationalist “Deutschlandplan” (Germany Plan) includes the intensification of the Hartz IV policies of welfare and labour “reforms,” the massive arming of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) and the construction of a European army.

The widespread rejection of this anti-social and militarist policy finds no express within the official party establishment. Since the Schröder-Fischer government (1998-2005), the Greens have been hated by workers as the second party of Hartz IV and war. And despite its occasional phrases concerning “social justice” and “peace,” the Left Party is also seen for what it is: an appendage of the SPD, which at its core represents the same pro-imperialist and anti-worker programme.

No matter how far to the right the SPD moves, the Left Party follows its every step. At the state level, it has been organizing massive social cuts together with the SPD and Greens for years. Like the SPD, it criticizes Merkel from the right when it comes to increasing the powers of the state. “This is how Merkel muddles along. First, 17,000 police jobs are cut. When, in the wake of attacks, it is clear what a mistake was made doing this, she campaigns for more police officers in the election,” wrote Oskar Lafontaine, the founding father of the Left Party, on his Facebook page on Monday.

In foreign policy too, the Left Party also presents itself as a party that can more consistently enforce a more independent German and European power politics than the CDU/CSU. “Nothing can really be expected” from Merkel “that defies the US,” Lafontaine said in another Facebook post. He also wrote, “For years, the

Left Party has been calling for an independent European foreign policy. It is a long time since Charles de Gaulle recognised that France herself must decide whether to participate in a war. That is why the country did not integrate the French army into the military structures of NATO, i.e., the USA.”

The election campaign is thus sharply polarised on social and political questions. On the one side stand the parties of the ruling class—from the CDU / CSU to the Left Party—who are reacting to the global crisis of capitalism with military rearmament, social attacks and the establishment of a police state, just as in the 1930s. On the other side stands the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) as the only party to advocate an international socialist programme against social cutbacks, dictatorship and war.

At the centre of the SGP’s election campaign are the following demands:

- \* Never again war! Stop Germany’s return to aggressive great power politics!
  - \* End poverty and exploitation—for social equality!
  - \* Defend democratic rights and the right to asylum!
- No to increased state powers and surveillance!

The most important prerequisite for the realization of a socialist programme is the establishment of a new socialist mass party. We therefore appeal to all those who reject capitalism and its parties and want to fight against war, poverty and oppression, to join the SGP and to support our election campaign. Share and discuss our election statement with friends, colleagues and acquaintances, organize election events in your region, donate to our election fund and vote SGP on September 24! Every vote for the SGP is a vote against war and capitalism.



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