

German Left Party calls for rapid formation of new government

Johannes Stern
30 November 2017

Germany's Left Party is responding to the political crisis in Berlin by shifting sharply to the right. After the collapse of talks to form a Jamaica coalition, the Left Party is participating in political horse-trading behind the scenes with the aim of forming a new government as quickly as possible and suppressing all social and political opposition.

After a meeting with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democrats, SPD) at Bellevue Palace, the content of which remained secret, the Left Party's joint parliamentary leaders, Dietmar Bartsch and Sahra Wagenknecht, made clear on Monday evening that they are prepared to support a government led by Chancellor Merkel (Christian Democrats, CDU). "The truth is that the ball is in Angela Merkel's court," declared Bartsch in a joint video interview with Wagenknecht. "Either she manages to form a government or she should not stand again as a chancellor candidate."

In his opinion, there are "two options": a minority government, which he would find "certainly exciting," because "on specific issues other majorities could be formed in Germany's parliament," or a new installment of the grand coalition. The latter variant is "also possible." However, they ought to "please reach a decision quickly, because the present situation" will lead to "an increase in frustration with politics for many people."

Wagenknecht spoke along similar lines. The discussion with Steinmeier was "very interesting and constructive," she said. They exchanged views "on the current political situation." She and Bartsch had expressed their concern that "an extension of the stalemate will cause even more people to turn away from politics and no longer feel represented." In this sense, the meeting was certainly worthwhile, she added,

"but the decisive steps now have to be taken by others."

In the face of mounting social protest—with thousands of workers demonstrating against mass layoffs and plant shutdowns at Siemens, Air Berlin and Thyssenkrupp in the past week alone—the Left Party wants at all costs to prevent the emergence of an independent movement of the working class against capitalism. It opposes new elections, which have been demanded by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP), so as to fight for a socialist programme in the working class. Instead, the Left Party has indicated to the ruling elite that it is ready to assume responsibility as part of a right-wing government at the federal level.

Prior to the meeting with Steinmeier, Bartsch stated in an interview with Südwestrundfunk (SWR) that the Left Party "in contrast to others has never refused," and always said, "Yes, we are ready to assume government responsibility." In parliament, there are "majorities on specific issues which significantly cross past divisions," he added. In the formation of a potential minority government, it would be "reasonable and worthwhile to consult the parties which under certain conditions will support reasonable decisions," Bartsch concluded.

If Bartsch had his way, he would start governing today rather than tomorrow. And not only in coalition with the SPD and Greens, but also with the neoliberal FDP.

Bartsch is "in favour of taking advantage of the current situation. I don't understand why Germany's parliament doesn't get to work," blustered Bartsch. As an example, he said there is "a majority in the German parliament for lifting the ban on unionising (in the education sector). The FDP, SPD, Greens and we are in favour of that. Why don't we decide that now?"

There are “additional points,” and Bartsch said he is “ready to make a start.” He added that he is someone who says that a minority government would open up opportunities in Germany.

The “opportunities” Bartsch sees in the formation of a minority government are also being intensely debated by influential sections of the ruling class. One example was the weekend edition of *Handelsblatt*, which praised in a cover story on the “political crisis in Berlin” the “long tradition” of minority governments in Scandinavia. In Sweden, Denmark and Norway “cabinets without a parliamentary majority are the norm.” At present, “the Swedish Social Democrats, who were largely responsible for establishing the Swedish welfare state” are “together with their Green coalition partners dependent on the support of the socialist Left Party,” the newspaper wrote.

In Denmark and Norway, “minority governments [have determined] day-to-day politics” and still “functioned successfully,” the mouthpiece of German big business reported. In Norway, for example, “former Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik implemented a comprehensive pension reform,” and “in Denmark, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen’s Social Democrats also managed to restructure state finances without a parliamentary majority.” His successor and subsequent NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen also governed without a parliamentary majority and “nonetheless passed controversial decisions in parliament, such as Denmark’s participation in the Iraq war.”

As in Scandinavia, the formation of a minority government would serve as a mechanism for Germany’s ruling class to integrate the far right into government. The centre-right coalition government in Denmark relied on the support of the Danish People’s Party (DF), the Danish sister party of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Leading AfD representatives are offering their services for such a role. The deputy leader of the AfD, Beatrix von Storch, declared in an interview with the *Osnabrücker Zeitung* on Tuesday that in parliament, her party would “certainly not serve as an obstruction,” and would vote for government initiatives “if they are in Germany’s interests.”

The Left Party knows that the conspiracy it is supporting to form a right-wing, militarist and anti-working class government will produce bitter class

struggles. Wherever they collaborate with the SPD and Greens at the state level, the Left Party has therefore worked feverishly to hire more police and arm them as heavily as possible.

Last weekend, the Left Party in Thuringia decided at its state party congress in Ilmenau to “strengthen security in rural areas” by introducing online surveillance and hiring more police officers. According to a motion adopted by a large majority, more than 200 police will be hired annually.

Online magazine *Vice am Montag* reported that German weapons manufacturer SIG Sauer will supply 415 fully automatic machine gun pistols to the Berlin state police. The red-red-green governed state of Berlin will thus belong to “the growing club of state police forces who are armed with weapons for modern warfare.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact