

Workers must demand new elections in Germany!

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei

10 January 2018

With the official start of exploratory talks between the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD), the political conspiracy being hatched in Berlin is entering a new stage. Behind the backs of the population, the ruling class is working to install the most right-wing government in Germany since the fall of Hitler's Third Reich.

The government programme being discussed is so anti-working class, militaristic and reactionary that the first round of negotiations took place in SPD headquarters at Willy Brandt House not only behind closed doors, but behind mirrored windows to prevent the press from taking photographs. The 39 participants of the exploratory talks have agreed on a ban on interviews to prevent the contents from being leaked to the public.

Officially, this secretiveness is being justified by the fact that the earlier coalition talks between the Christian Democrats, the Free Democratic Party and the Greens had failed on 19 November, because participants had divulged the course of the discussions and commented on them in public interviews, on talk shows and via social media.

In reality, the ruling class is resorting to such secretive measures because it fears the mounting opposition to their policies of militarism, internal rearmament and social austerity. According to a recent Insa survey, only 30 percent of respondents would support a continuation of the grand coalition, and there is substantial public support for new elections.

Under these conditions, the Socialist Equality Party (Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, SGP) is renewing its call for new elections. A clique of right-wing conspirators must not be permitted to get its way without any mandate from the people. In a new election campaign, the SGP would expose the real aims of the

bourgeois parties—including the SPD, Left Party and Greens—and fight to build a socialist alternative to capitalism, war and authoritarianism.

Over the past few days, leaders of all three parties at the talks have made it abundantly clear that a new edition of the grand coalition would not simply continue the policies of the previous one. Its course will be even more reactionary. The focus is on three topics: foreign and military policy, austerity and welfare cuts and, in order to suppress opposition to both, the expansion of the police and surveillance apparatus.

Social Democrat Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, seeking to retain his office in the new government, is campaigning for a massive military rearmament and a great power policy, which is aimed not only against Russia and China, but also against the United States.

Last week in *Der Spiegel*, Gabriel compared Europe with “vegetarians” who had to assert themselves “in a world full of carnivores” and demanded policies of massive rearmament and war. Germany could no longer rely on “the French, British and above all the Americans enforcing our interests in the world.”

Like the reactionary political theorist Herfried Münkler, to whom he constantly refers, Gabriel believes Germany can only become a great power once again, if it becomes the “hegemon” and “taskmaster” of the European Union. To that end, he and other SPD politicians are pushing for close cooperation with French President Emmanuel Macron, who also insists on militarily strengthening of the EU.

This line was justified in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* by the pro-SPD diplomat Michael Steiner. Noting that Germans constitute only one percent of the world’s population and that their wealth depends on trade with foreign countries, he wrote, “We need the EU as a powerful, valued global player that can shape global

developments on an equal footing.” Among the “areas of activity in which we must work together in the EU,” Steiner cited, “First, security: closer military links, police cooperation and joint border security... Second, business and finance... And third, foreign policy.”

There are differences on the European question, as the CSU and a wing of the CDU insist on more “national sovereignty” and on maintaining close relations with the right-wing governments in Hungary and Austria. But these are tactical in nature. All of the participants agree on the fundamental question of a massive rearmament and expansion of the German military and security apparatus.

The same applies to adhering to former CDU Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble’s austerity policies, which have caused a social disaster not only in Greece and other EU members, but in Germany itself. Although social inequality in Germany is at its highest level since 1913, and poverty and homelessness are constantly increasing, all parties are holding firm on austerity measures. At the same time, they are planning tax cuts and a massive increase in military expenditures, which can only be financed through further cuts in social spending.

In response to Donald Trump’s “America First” policy and growing rivalry with China, the large corporations have launched a new wave of mass layoffs and wage cuts. Tens of thousands of jobs are already being cut at Siemens, ThyssenKrupp, Bombardier, Air Berlin, Opel and Deutsche Bank.

The coalition talks come amid a growing wave of labour militancy throughout Germany. Thousands of workers went on strike this week in the metals and engineering industries, after wage negotiations began for 3.9 million workers. There are indications that this could develop into an even larger strike by the beginning of February.

The growing struggles by the working class—and the widespread popular rejection of militarism—are the reason that both the CDU/CSU and the SPD are seeking a sharp shift to the right in domestic politics. They want to massively upgrade the police and intelligence services in anticipation of violent class battles and are adopting the slogans of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the far-right party which, seven decades after Hitler’s downfall, has moved back into the German parliament.

Sigmar Gabriel is demanding that slogans identified with the right such as “identity,” “Leitkultur” (“leading culture”) and “Heimat” (“homeland”) find their way into the programme of the SPD. In line with the ideological pioneers of National Socialism (Nazism) in the Weimar Republic, the leading CSU politician Alexander Dobrindt is demanding a “conservative revolution.” His party colleague Manfred Weber, leader of the conservative EPP in the European Parliament, said at a recent CSU gathering: “In 2018, the central European topic will be the final solution of the refugee question,” a formulation that unmistakably recalls Hitler’s “final solution of the Jewish question.”

With breathtaking speed, the establishment parties are returning to political traditions that had been regarded as long since buried. This also applies to the leadership of the Left Party. Its parliamentary group leader Dietmar Bartsch expressly supports Gabriel’s great power politics, and the wing around Sahra Wagenknecht and Oskar Lafontaine has long been agitating against refugees and advocating the sealing up of the borders.

The Socialist Equality Party is the only party that opposes this right-wing conspiracy. In new elections, it would mobilize all means to expose the reactionary machinations of the bourgeois parties and fight for a programme that expresses the interests of the German and international working class, connecting the struggle against war with the fight against capitalism, and provide a socialist way out of the blind alley in which the current social order finds itself.



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