For new elections and a socialist offensive against the grand coalition in Germany

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With the publication of the results of the exploratory talks between Germany's Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) last Friday, the warnings made by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP—Socialist Equality Party) have been confirmed. The 28-page document that will serve as the basis for a new installment of the grand coalition shows that the ruling class is in the process of establishing the most right-wing government since the downfall of the Third Reich.

On refugee policy, the CDU/CSU and SPD have adopted the demands of the far-right for an upper limit for refugees. The document issued following the talks states that "migration numbers will not surpass the range of 180,000 to 220,000 annually." For its implementation, i.e., a brutal crackdown to block refugees from the war zones of the Middle East and North Africa, "effective protection of Europe's external borders" is required. The notorious European agency for border control, Frontex, will be "further developed into a real border protection police force."

In social and finance policy, austerity policies that have already thrown millions of young people in Germany and across Europe into poverty and unemployment will be continued. Key formulations such as "We want to strengthen the EU's competitiveness in the context of globalisation," and "We want to push ahead with fiscal controls in the EU" leave no doubt about this.

The establishment of a police state to suppress mounting opposition to social attacks, militarism and war among workers and young people is on the order of the day. The CDU/CSU and SPD intend to "expand by an additional 15,000 positions … the security agencies at the federal and state level," and create "at least 2,000 new jobs in the judiciary (courts, prosecutors, law enforcement)." The document adds, "European security cooperation" also needs to be "strengthened."

This includes controls over the Internet. "Security standards for IT structures and critical infrastructure must be developed jointly between the federal government and the states, and if possible throughout Europe. The security agencies require equivalent powers in dealing with the Internet that they have outside of the Internet," the paper states.

On foreign policy, the grand coalition plans to press ahead with the revival of German militarism, which was first announced at the 2014 Munich Security Conference. In order that the German army "can expertly fulfil all of its assigned tasks in all of their dimensions, we will make available the best equipment, training and care to our soldiers," write the CDU/CSU and SPD. In addition, the document calls for an extension and expansion of the unpopular military interventions in Mali, Afghanistan and Syria.

To enforce German imperialist interests around the world, the CDU/CSU and SPD appeal for a joint European security and defence policy in cooperation with France. Global power relations have "certainly changed fundamentally in recent years—politically, economically and militarily," the document declares. Europe has to "take its fate more than in the past into its own hands. Only together does the EU have an opportunity to assert itself in the world and enforce its common interests."

The opposition within the population to the grand coalition's anti-working class and militarist policies is enormous. In last September's elections, both the CDU/CSU and SPD obtained their worst results in the post-World War II era and lost a combined 13 percent of the vote.

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A few hours after the three party leaders, Angela Merkel (CDU), Horst Seehofer (CSU), and Martin Schulz (SPD) declared they were “extremely pleased” with the agreement, a poll revealed that only around one-third of those asked assessed the results of the exploratory talks positively. A majority opposed the continuation of the grand coalition.

The criticisms made by the Social Democratic youth movement (Jusos) and the SPD state party in Saxony-Anhalt, which voted against the SPD’s participation in a new grand coalition at its party congress on Saturday, must be understood in this context. Sections of the SPD fear that opposition in the population will continue to grow and a socialist perspective will win mass influence if the party continues its unpopular coalition with the CDU/CSU and thereby makes the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) the leading opposition party in parliament.

Anger is brewing under the surface in Germany and many other countries, and opposition to the anti-social and militarist policies advocated by all capitalist governments is mounting. Mass protests have already taken place this year in Iran and Tunisia, and Ford workers in Romania conducted a wildcat strike in December against the company-controlled trade union. The ongoing contract struggle by almost 4 million German industrial workers and the protests by workers against mass layoffs at Siemens, ThyssenKrupp and Bombardier are part of the return of the international class struggle.

The Left Party is particularly alarmed about this. In an interview with the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, Left Party parliamentary leader Dietmar Bartsch warned, “The financial gulf between the super-rich and poor in Germany is growing ever greater. … The number of billionaires grows and at the same time the poor become more numerous. And what do the CDU/CSU and SPD want to do about that?” They are, he said, “perpetuating a dangerous social development.”

Bartsch’s attempt to portray his party as having a social conscience is hogwash. Everyone knows that the Left Party is just as responsible for the catastrophic social conditions as all the other capitalist parties.

Wherever it governs with the SPD and Greens at the state level, it participates in the assault on social services and public spending and the redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top. One wing of the Left Party is now seeking to channel the anger in the population in an explicitly nationalist direction. Sahra Wagenknecht and her husband Oskar Lafontaine are campaigning for the creation of a “left-wing people’s party” with sections of the SPD and Greens that would orient openly to AfD voters on refugee policy.

This plays directly into the hands of the ruling elite, which intends to use the current government crisis to push the incoming government even further to the right. “I am shaken and disappointed by the results of the exploratory talks,” declared Andre Wüstner, head of the German Army Association on Friday. The negotiated increase in military spending is nowhere near sufficient, he declared.

Leading representatives of big business are calling for an intensification of the attacks on the working class and a multi-billion-euro tax handout à la Trump for German corporations to ensure their international competitiveness.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei is the only party opposing this right-wing conspiracy from the left and calling for new elections. The same ruling class that twice in the last century plunged the world into a bloody abyss cannot be permitted to get another chance to put its reactionary plans into practice. The SGP will intensify its campaign for new elections and fight in the working class for a socialist programme to oppose war, social attacks and authoritarianism. We call upon all workers and young people who oppose capitalism to support the building of a new socialist party and join the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei.

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