German grand coalition parties negotiate over rearmament and war

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5 February 2018

A third edition of the grand coalition will not simply continue the policies of the current one. It will massively upgrade the military, initiate a new round of social attacks and establish a police state in close cooperation with the far-right AfD. This is becoming increasingly clear with the approaching agreement between the SPD and the conservative Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union (both parties known as the Union).

While the media reported "breakthroughs" in health and housing policies on Sunday evening, initial information on the coalition paper shows what it is really about.

The *Handelsblatt* reported that the Bundeswehr should get combat drones "as soon as possible." That is what the Union and the SPD had agreed on in the foreign policy and defense negotiating group. The purchase is part of a broader push for a joint European military and major power policy. The draft of the Foreign and Defense Policy chapter states: "We will continue the development of the Euro-drone in the framework of the European Defense Union." As a "temporary solution" is "the Heron TP drone leased." It should serve the Bundeswehr "until the Euro drone to be developed is ready."

Comments and strategy papers by influential military strategists leave no doubt as to what is being prepared behind closed doors. "The coalition negotiations are not just about the usual machinations," write Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, the speechwriter of former German president Joachim Gauck, and Jan Techau, the director of the Richard C. Holbrooke Forum at the American Academy in Berlin, in a contribution for the German daily *Die Welt*. "In the midst of increasingly threatening times, it is about decisions of strategic importance: Will the Federal Republic in future [...] entertain modern, combat-ready and coalition-able armed forces?"

The entire comment makes clear what the next federal government is planning: "It wants to invest €130 billion in new material within 15 years and to increase troop strength by a few thousand men. The defense budget should approach two percent of gross domestic product by 2024. The German government—with support from the ministers of the grand coalition—has already pledged this to its NATO partners in 2014 and 2016."

Claudia Major, a representative of the government-affiliated think-tank German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), goes even further in a comment entitled "Germany's dangerous nuclear sleepwalking." She writes, "The next German government will have to tackle several controversial security issues, from arms exports to meeting NATO's target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense. But the one item that is particularly difficult for Berlin—and that it is ill-prepared to deal with—is nuclear weapons."

The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) has already warned during the federal election campaign last summer that the policy of the next government will be determined not by the electoral promises of the parties, but by the international crisis of capitalism and the reaction of the ruling class. This is now being confirmed in a dangerous way.

Major writes, "In February, the United States wants to publish its Nuclear Posture Review. North Korea wants to stay high on Washington's security agenda. The Iran deal is fragile. As for NATO, nuclear policies remain at issue; the alliance has voiced its concern on Russia's alleged violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. All this will affect the German debate, whether it is prepared for it or not."

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Comments such as these expose the promises of the SPD and the Union to spend more on education and social issues as bold lies. In fact, the next federal government will make the working class pay in every respect for its militarism and imperialist power politics—as cannon fodder in war and in the form of massive welfare cuts to finance rearmament. Leading business representatives, such as Siemens boss Joe Kaeser, are demanding multibillion-dollar tax cuts à la Trump also for the local companies in order to make German capital competitive internationally.

Domestically, the Union parties and the SPD are planning the establishment of a police state. According to media reports, both want to strip alleged terrorists with dual nationality of their German passports and expand DNA analysis. So far, it was only allowed to analyze the genetic material in criminal proceedings to determine a person's ancestry and gender. In the future, the analysis should include the age and external characteristics such as eyes, hair and skin color. Also, the video surveillance at so-called "focal points" should be "effectively expanded." The judiciary is to create 6,000 new jobs, one-third of them in the penal system alone. Union and SPD are seeking 15,000 additional jobs from federal and state security agencies.

The ruling class is reacting to the growing resistance to their anti-social and militarist policies. In Germany and many other countries anger is brewing below the surface. The strikes of more than a million workers in the metal and electrical industry last week are part of a revival of the international class struggle. Previous mass protests have already taken place in Iran and Tunisia, tens of thousands protested in Greece against the austerity policies of the Syriza government, and in Romania, Ford workers were striking against the company-controlled union.

Under conditions of growing class struggle and sharp international conflicts, the ruling class, as in the 1930s, is relying on right-wing forces. Domestically, it became apparent in the past few days that the grand coalition will essentially take over the program of the AfD.

After the Union parties and the SPD had already taken up the demand of the extreme right for an upper limit ("Obergrenze") for refugees, they decided on Thursday to abolish the right to family reunification for refugees. At the same time, they made three representatives of the extreme-right-wing of the AfD chairmen of important Bundestag committees.

This decision was also supported by the Left Party. "I think the AfD is entitled to these functions. That is parliamentary custom. And she [the AfD] is elected, and insofar she has the right to these functions," stated Sahra Wagenknecht, the leader of the Left party faction, on a television talk show.

The SPG is the only party that fights the right-wing conspiracy in Berlin on the basis of a socialist program and demands new elections. For the establishment of the most right-wing German government since the fall of the Nazi regime, the ruling class has no mandate at all. Already in the elections in September, the Union and the SPD had their worst results in the postwar period and lost a total of 14 percent of the vote. Now, according to a recent survey, the SPD stands at its all-time low of 17.5 percent. Another recent poll showed that not even one in three (32 percent) support the formation of a grand coalition government.

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