

Left Party, Greens and the SPD agree to austerity measures, military build-up in talks for Berlin's new Senate

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On Monday, the party leaderships of the Left Party, the Greens, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) voted in Berlin to begin joint coalition negotiations. This was accompanied by a massive campaign in political circles and the media to demonize such a government. Chancellor Merz warned against “radical leftists,” while Defense Minister Pistorius (SPD) spoke of “a signal against the Bundeswehr” and opposed a “red-green-red” coalition.

This campaign can only be understood against the backdrop of the mass protests erupting across Europe. France, Belgium, Albania and Italy are all being shaken by a massive youth uprising. In Spain, hundreds of thousands are taking to the streets to protest the country's housing crisis, and strikes are spreading among the working class across the continent. It is this enormous opposition—which also found a distorted expression in the Left Party's record-breaking recent election result in Berlin—that is the real target of the campaign.

The Left Party itself is a proven pillar of the existing order and of the policies of war and austerity and is even actively participating in the campaign against its own members of parliament. On Tuesday, a meeting of the parliamentary group's executive committee was scheduled to decide on the future of Neukölln district candidate Vanessa Emde. However, the decision was postponed by one week after Emde went on sick leave.

The executive committee accuses Emde of failing to adhere to the joint statement by all Left Party representatives against antisemitism. Last week, Emde had declared that she would not back down from the position she campaigned on—the one for which she was elected with 46.2 percent of the vote. At that time, referring to Israel, she had said: “States have no right to exist—People have a right to exist.” The call for a “democratic one-state solution” with equal rights for all people is politically legitimate and should not be criminalized, Emde declared.

These measured, humanistic considerations are unacceptable to the Left Party and could now lead to Emde's expulsion. It is remarkable that, of all things, criticism of genocide and the rejection of an apartheid regime are made grounds for expulsion. It is no coincidence that the justification of genocide has been elevated to a matter of state policy, for it expresses the return of German militarism particularly clearly. In order to assert its economic and geostrategic interests in the Middle East, the German government is prepared to support the methods of

genocide. This is the sharpest expression of a policy aimed at once again asserting German interests around the world through military force.

The Left Party now makes approval of this course the foundation of its government policy. Previously, the party had already approved the horrendous military buildup budget in the Bundesrat, which is also placing a massive strain on the budgets of the states and municipalities.

The exploratory paper, on the basis of which the party committees decided to enter into negotiations for the city's new Senate, clearly shows that a red-green-red government will recoup these costs through cuts imposed on the population. What actually lies behind the rose-spectacled rhetoric about a safe, social, and family-friendly city becomes apparent on the final pages of the paper, which deal with budget consolidation.

There, the parties announce a “consolidation path” for the budget, which includes, among other things, a “spending cap” and “spending prioritization.” It then states: “The scope for joint projects involving additional spending depends on the consolidation path and will be strictly limited. Furthermore, any additional funding requested by the coalition must be financed through reallocations.” The paper then calls on social service providers to “limit spending growth.” All of these are euphemisms for severe cuts to social services aimed at plugging holes in the budget.

In the sphere of state military buildup, however, there are to be no cuts—only more funding. The Berlin police, who regularly beat up demonstrators protesting the genocide in Gaza, are to be strengthened through a “modernization and investment plan.” In addition, police effectiveness is to be increased. A key focus of the State Criminal Police Office is to become the “combating of extremism.”

The demand to expropriate Berlin's exploitive landlords—the main issue upon which the Left Party won the election—has, in turn, been watered down to a “light” form of socialization. Although Berliners voted in favor of socializing the main real estate conglomerates in a referendum with 57.6 percent support, this decision by the people will not be implemented by a red-green-red Senate.

According to the exploratory paper, there will be no expropriation of corporations owning more than 3,000 apartments,

as demanded by Berliners. Instead, only corporations with more than 10,000 apartments will lose a portion of their holdings—namely, apartments exceeding the 10,000 threshold. As a result, instead of the more than 230,000 apartments, only 150,000–160,000 are to be nationalized.

While the number of apartments is thus much lower, the compensation paid out is nevertheless expected to be higher. While the initiative behind the referendum estimated compensation at 7.3 to 13.7 billion euros, the new Senate intends to pay out up to 16 billion.

In 2004, the then-Social Democratic-Left Party Senate sold off 65,700 state-owned apartments for 405 million euros—that is, for about 6,200 euros per apartment, or roughly 30,000 euros, if you include the assumption of loans. Now, the apartments owned by large corporations are to be purchased for over 100,000 euros—and they have the nerve to call this expropriation! After the rent sharks have enriched themselves at the tenants' expense for two decades, they are now supposed to get paid for it, too!

In addition, it has been decided that the 2021 referendum will be implemented in three years at the earliest. The corporations affected thus have more than enough time to adapt their portfolios to the new legal situation. Other parts of the exploratory paper include the joint statement, in which the negotiators affirm "Israel's right to exist," announce bans on pro-Palestinian activists at Berlin universities and commit to strengthening "the police and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in their mission to protect Jewish life in Berlin."

The paper contains mechanisms through which the Greens and the SPD can pressure the Left Party to expel members from its parliamentary caucus if they do not adhere to the paper. According to media reports, the Greens had already assumed that Emde would not even be admitted to the Left's parliamentary caucus at its constituent meeting last Tuesday. A decision on her expulsion will now be made next week.

The so-called "left" wing of the party is responding to these sweeping attacks by subordinating itself to government policy. Every single member of the Left Party in the Berlin state parliament, including Vanessa Emde, has signed a statement whose clarity leaves nothing to be desired. Based on federal and state party resolutions, it affirms "Israel's right to exist and equal rights for all people in Israel." It goes on to state: "Likewise, we stand for the right of Palestine to exist and for equal rights for all people in Palestine." While the Israeli government is razing the Gaza Strip to the ground and gradually annexing the West Bank, the Left spouts fantasies about a two-state solution, only to ultimately invoke Israel's right to exist.

Israeli crimes and genocide are not mentioned anywhere in the document. Instead, the statement defames the Palestinians' resistance against decades of occupation and brutal oppression as "violence contrary to international law and human rights" and as "terrorism," the endorsement of which must be prevented. Only when people gather "to express sympathy and concern for the population of a war zone and to demonstrate for peace" should the police facilitate and protect such gatherings.

In a video, Emde confirms that the resolution, which she herself signed, selectively quotes from the Left Party's resolution and

omits criticism of the genocide against the Palestinians. She goes on to explain that she will not retract her cautious statements regarding the one-state solution. At the same time, she celebrates the fact that, thanks to her kowtowing to the party leadership, she was ultimately admitted into the parliamentary caucus—a small "gain of ground against the *raison d'état*."

One could not more sharply define the role of the "left" wing within the Left Party. Emde has signed a pledge to "Israel's right to exist"—the very core of the German government's *raison d'état*—commits to implementing all party resolutions, and then goes so far as to declare this a victory. In fact, it shows that the "left" wing is nothing more than a fig leaf for the Left Party's right-wing policies.

During the election campaign, Emde had declared: "Better to be right in the opposition than wrong in the government. For a Left with backbone." For this stance—and for her criticism of Israeli genocide—she received 46.2 percent of the vote. Now, just a few weeks later, she is signing a document that glosses over the genocide and defends the rationale of state power—all to avoid jeopardizing coalition negotiations with the Greens and the SPD!

The logic of a party's stance on the role of the state and militarism is a litmus test. Anyone who supports a policy of war will also impose the necessary social attacks and state rearmament. In this respect, the signatures of all the members of parliament make it clear that they will not challenge the government on any other issues either but will instead provide the left-sounding noises to cover the tracks of the right-wing policies of the Left Party.

This is not simply due to the depravity of the individuals in question but to the party's fundamental orientation. The Left Party has never been a socialist party. Emerging from the ruling Stalinist party of former East Germany, which brutally oppressed workers in the GDR and then played the leading role in restoring capitalism, it has stood for the accompanying social cuts since its founding.

The events in Berlin show that the "left-wing" members of parliament do not represent an alternative to the party's fundamental line but rather use their left-wing rhetoric to cover up the right-wing course—regardless of whether they are ultimately expelled from the parliamentary group or not.

What is needed are not such fakers. What is needed is a break with this party. The only way to stop the official war policy and social cuts is through the international mobilization of the working class directed against the root of these policies: capitalism. The Socialist Equality Party is fighting for this socialist program. Register now as an active supporter and become a member of the SGP.



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