

# SPD right-wing politician Thilo Sarrazin praises Left Party budget cuts

By Endrik Bastian  
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“Show me your friends and I will tell you who you are” is a well-known proverb. In a recent interview in the financial daily *Handelsblatt*, with the revealing title, “Thilo Sarrazin enthuses over the Left Party,” the former SPD finance senator in the state of Berlin, who is best known for his racist attacks on immigrants and tirades against Hartz IV welfare claimants, made statements that must even be embarrassing to the hardened cynics in the Left Party.

Sarrazin praised his cooperation with the Left Party during his time as finance senator from 2002 until 2009 as “positive throughout.” The Left Party senators Harald Wolf (economics), Heidi Knake-Werner (social affairs and labour) and the former state parliamentary group chair and current deputy in the federal parliament Stephan Liebich won special praise for being “dependable, hard-working and competent in their own areas of expertise.”

He also declared that “all four parties—CDU, SPD, the Greens and Left Party—[have] virtually the same line on immigration policy, as well as education policy.”

“Politically and functionally,” Sarrazin added, “the last years of the Berlin state government” have “not been particularly impressive.” He added cynically, “I don’t see the risk of deterioration in the event of an SPD/Left Party/Green coalition.” On the federal level, “the SPD cannot always remain as junior partner of the CDU,” but had to “offer its own perspective to be the Chancellor’s party.”

Sarrazin did not attempt to conceal his praise for the former Pabloite (Wolf), reformed Stalinist (Knake-Werner), and right-wing careerist (Liebich). “In some ways, the budgetary consolidation was easier to achieve with them than with some [SPD] party colleagues,” according to the right-wing populist.

Paradoxically, it had been helpful that he “stood on the right-wing of the SPD.” In comparison to Green Party representatives, “communication with the hardened old Marxists of the PDS was a mere trifle.”

Sarrazin knows what he is talking about. Together with the Left Party, he carved out a swathe of social devastation in Berlin that was unprecedented in Germany and made the city-state the unchallenged centre of poverty in the country.

The SPD/Left Party government privatised over 100,000 social housing units, cut 35,000 public sector jobs, reduced public sector wages by 10 percent, imposed the partial privatisation of the water authority, eliminated the free provision of materials at schools, cut welfare benefits for the blind and did away with the social ticket for public transportation—to name only some of the main points of the SPD-Left Party’s orgy of austerity.

Like Sarrazin, the Left Party continues to boast today about its anti-working class policies. In his recently-published book, *SPD/Left Party in Berlin—a (self) critical balance sheet*, Wolf hailed the budget surpluses achieved in Berlin since 2012 as the result of their own cost-cutting measures.

“The fundamentals for this positive development were laid by the cuts implemented by the SPD/Left Party. Without the measures to restructure the budget, in the first legislative period in particular, Berlin would still today ... build up ever increasing debts,” the former economics minister proclaimed with no small amount of pride.

Due to this “balance sheet,” even far right-wing representatives of the ruling elite are convinced that a renewed alliance with the Left Party is the best option for the enforcement of their programme of demonising refugees, austerity and the militarisation of the state at

home and abroad against social opposition.

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