

Germany's pseudo-left Marx21 hails Martin Schulz as the “revival of Social Democracy”

By Ulrich Rippert
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The pseudo-left group Marx21 is hailing the Social Democrats' (SPD) chancellor candidate Martin Schulz as a “reaction against Trump and the rise of the right worldwide,” and as the “revival of left-wing reformism.”

In a document the group, which is active inside the Left Party, wrote, “The process of reviving social democratic parties, which fell into a deep crisis due to their market-liberal orientation, can be successful because apparently more left-wing leading figures have come forward in these parties. Martin Schulz clearly stands up to the right wing, calls for more social justice and intends to position the SPD alongside the trade unions for higher wages for ‘hard-working people.’”

Marx21 referred to invitations to discuss “red-red-green options for government” as “poisonous,” writing, “The left-wing rhetoric from Schulz will not fundamentally alter the market- and business-friendly policies of the SPD.” But this is merely a pro forma declaration.

In reality, Marx21 cannot wait to join a federal government under Schulz's leadership. Their parliamentary deputy, Christine Buchholz, who has previously accompanied the defence minister by plane to visit German troops in Africa, could then plan the German army's future wars—disguised as “peace missions”—as state secretary

Schulz is mobilising “hopes for social change,” from which the left Party “should not cut itself off,” the paper states. The Left Party could “not simply stand on the sidelines and criticise,” but had to “promote and organise the struggle for social justice and against racism”—with Schulz's SPD! And further, “Many voters expect from the Left Party and a red-red or red-red-green government that they deal with the urgent problems.”

The WSWS refers to groups like Marx21 as “pseudo-left” because they cover up their right-wing policies with left phrases. The policy Marx21 strives for corresponds to the interests of a significant section of the

German bourgeoisie.

Marx21's claim that the emergence of Martin Schulz is the expression of a shift to the left turns reality on its head. In truth, the change at the top of the SPD was aimed at exploiting the outrage at Trump for the goals of German imperialism. The media hype surrounding Schulz is not “part of a reaction against Trump and the rise of the right worldwide,” as Marx21 claims, but rather the attempt to utilise the “reaction against Trump” to advance Germany's great power ambitions.

Trump's election and the first measures adopted by his administration have triggered a political earthquake, whose shockwaves are spreading around the globe. While millions of people are following his anti-immigrant clampdown and war threats with horror and concern, the German ruling elite is responding to Trump's “America First” tirades with the slogan “Deutschland über alles.”

In the media and political establishment, one hears only two words about the significance of Trump's victory for Germany: “chance” and “wake-up call.” Trump ought not only to be seen as a threat, but also as a chance and wake-up call to finally rearm and intervene militarily. Since the Nazis sang in their “Storm Song,” “Woe to the people, who today still dream! Germany, awake! Awake!” there have never been such persistent calls urging Germany to reawaken.

The chairman of the Munich Security Conference, Wolfgang Ischinger, stated in mid-February, “The US can unfortunately no longer serve as the symbol of the West's political-moral leadership.” Europe had to fill the vacuum which had emerged and assume more leadership responsibility. To this end, military rearmament had to be pursued much more quickly and comprehensively than in the past.

The already adopted gradual increase of defence spending to 2 percent of GDP was insufficient, according to Ischinger, who added that at least 3 percent was

required. To achieve this, budget costs for crisis prevention, development aid, diplomacy and defence had to be reorganised and directed towards military rearmament.

Journalists are debating the necessity of German nuclear weapons and complain that Germans “have forgotten how to think in nuclear categories” (*Die Zeit*).

Such a massive programme of military rearmament requires social cuts and austerity measures. Democratic rights must be abolished and police state structures created to enforce these policies. At the same time, German dominance in Europe is to be strengthened and will serve as the basis for the return to German great power politics.

A section of the ruling elite views the SPD and the former president of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, as better equipped to carry through such a deep-going political change than Angela Merkel, whose party is divided and who, after 12 years in power, is no longer seen as capable of taking such a decisive step.

Two decades ago, it was a red-green federal government that brutally imposed the Agenda 2010 welfare reforms and organised the German army’s first foreign military interventions since the Second World War. The SPD is now set to assume the leadership role once again in pursuit of the interests of German imperialism.

In a red-red-green government, the Left Party would have the role of integrating the trade unions into the structures of government even more so than two decades ago. Their union bureaucrats in the factories would suppress all opposition from workers.

The current media storm surrounding Schulz and his portrayal as the “SPD’s messiah” is aimed at exploiting the opposition against Trump and the emergence of right-wing parties to bring a government to power which in every sense would be more right-wing than the current one.

Under such conditions, Marx21 plays an important role: to create as much confusion as possible and to cover up the right-wing policies of the SPD, Greens and Left Party with talk of a “revival of Social Democracy.”

The claim that Schulz represents the renewal of the SPD, and will lead the party back to its traditional values and fight for more social justice, is absurd and dishonest. More than anyone else, Schulz embodies the hated policies of the SPD. He is a member of the right-wing Seeheimer Circle inside the SPD, worked closely in the European Parliament with the conservative faction and

led a de facto grand coalition at a European level.

Schulz has always defended the Hartz IV reforms, describing them as “necessary reforms.” Today he speaks merely of a few “correctives” that must be made to Agenda 2010. He does not even want to commit himself to increasing the low minimum wage, on which no person can reasonably live.

On issues of domestic security, he attacks the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union from the right. A few days ago, he accused them of having “bled dry” the police and security agencies because of their “neoliberal ideology.” The chairman of the Police Trade Union, Oliver Malchow, immediately spoke out, telling the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, “We ourselves have been saying: 20,000 police officers are lacking nationwide.”

That the Left Party is responding to Trump and the rise of right-wing parties by offering to participate in government arises out of the bourgeois character of this party. In spite of its name, it fully defends the power and property relations upon which capitalism rests.

The Left Party is less bothered by Trump and the rise of the Alternative for Germany, with whom it largely agrees on a right-wing programme, than it is by the breakdown of the mechanisms that in the past served to moderate the class struggle and prop up capitalist rule. The Left Party is closing ranks with the other establishment parties and offering its services as an anchor of stability. Marx21 has served for decades as a fig leaf for the Left Party and its right-wing policies.

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