

German Social Democratic election programme: More police, more surveillance, faster deportations

By Ulrich Rippert
25 May 2017

Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) executive adopted a draft election programme Monday for the federal election campaign. The program consists of expanded funding for war and domestic repression, concealed behind empty phrases about "social justice."

The presentation of the programme was accompanied by organisational problems and blunders. On Sunday, a spokesman for the party executive cancelled the long-planned press conference for Monday afternoon. Shortly afterwards, the cancellation was withdrawn. The presentation went ahead after a delay and without the presence of party chairman Martin Schulz. Representatives of the election programme commission declared that important parts of the programme were still being worked on.

The media subsequently screamed about a "black Monday for the Social Democrats" and "days of chaos for the SPD." But in reality, the organisational blunders are the result of bitter conflicts taking place behind closed doors in Willy Brandt House, the SPD's headquarters. The statements on domestic security and the strengthening of the state apparatus do not go far enough for the right-wing Seeheimer Circle faction of the SPD. The Seeheimer Circle has also made internal criticisms of Schulz's statements that he would not place the rearming of the army at the centre of the campaign and would not engage in an arms race.

Johannes Kahrs, the spokesman for the Seeheimer Circle, stated early Monday morning on Deutschlandfunk that he welcomed the postponing of the press conference because there was still a need for discussion. He then noted, "For us as Social Democrats, a strong state is important, one which also guarantees that local security is the priority in all

areas."

Internal security could not be neglected under any circumstances, he added. The demand for 15,000 new police officers, more video surveillance, a stricter deportation policy, the protection of Europe's external borders and more powers for the federal criminal police office were all existing social democratic demands.

Kahrs stated, "I can tell you that at the federal level, the SPD has worked hard in recent years to ensure, for example, that we have more federal police officers, initially in the face of opposition from [Christian Democratic Union, CDU, Interior Minister] Mr. de Maizière and [CDU Finance Minister] Mr. Schäuble. We managed to secure not only a further 3,000 positions, but an additional 4,000, making a total of 7,000 new positions at the federal police. That is important for us as Social Democrats."

The Seeheimer Circle is pushing for an SPD election campaign aimed at attacking the CDU from the right. The CDU only talks about internal security, but rarely do anything, Kahrs said on Monday, adding, "I know how we had to fight on the budget committee, even though we had financed it, to get Mr. de Maizière to order three ships which we needed for the federal police in the Baltic Sea, and to implement that when the money was there. I know how big a struggle it was just to get new positions for the federal police."

Kahrs repeatedly stressed that it was the SPD, and not the CDU and its Bavarian ally the Christian Social Union, that played the leading role in advocating a stronger state apparatus. "For example, we wanted to have helicopters to compliment the new federal police officers, which we played a part in achieving, as I've said, at times against Mr. de Maizière. That meant that

on the budget committee we asked if it was not possible to rapidly equip 200 of these new police officers with helicopters within Germany, why not order new helicopters?”

The SPD was also the more aggressive than the CDU, he said, when it comes to deporting “criminal foreigners.” One only had to consider what the “free, Hanseatic city of Hamburg is doing under Olaf Scholz, and with firmness, and for many years.”

The SPD’s election programme bears this right-wing stamp. In a section entitled “Criminality and deterring terrorism,” a summary of the strengthening of the state apparatus is provided. The SPD calls for 15,000 new police officers at the federal and state levels and the expansion of video surveillance. A European prosecutor’s office and a European anti-terrorism centre will be established to investigate criminal acts within the EU and improve collaboration between intelligence agencies.

In the section “Refugee policy and immigration” the SPD calls for rejected asylum seekers to be firmly and rapidly deported. The control of the Schengen zone’s external borders would be strengthened. The SPD is deliberately inciting xenophobic sentiments with this demand. Like all of the bourgeois parties, the SPD is seeking to divert the mounting opposition to the social crisis in a right-wing direction.

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