

For new elections and a socialist alternative to Germany's grand coalition

By Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
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Following the decision by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) at its special congress to initiate coalition talks with Germany's conservative parties, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) strengthens its demand for new elections. The ruling elite cannot be permitted to bring to power the most right-wing government since the downfall of the Nazi regime, in the face of strong opposition from workers and young people.

The performance of the SPD leadership at the Bonn congress has already made clear that a new installment of the grand coalition would not merely continue the policies of the current government. It would implement the despised policies of militarism, the construction of a police state and a social counter-revolution, with increasingly authoritarian methods in the face of mounting popular opposition.

SPD general secretary Andrea Nahles described new elections in her hysterical declaration in favour of a continuation of the grand coalition as "idiotic." Party leader Martin Schulz reminded the delegates that the SPD has assumed "civic responsibility" in the past, when "some of the parties giving us advice" did not even exist. He was referring to the SPD's vote for war credits in 1914 and the brutal suppression of the Spartacus uprising almost a century ago.

The speeches by the opponents of a grand coalition made clear the depth of the opposition the SPD confronts within the broader population. The further he travelled from Willy Brandt House, the party's headquarters, the increasingly irreconcilable became this opposition, said the leader of the SPD youth (Jusos), Kevin Kühnert. Others expressed the fear that the SPD could experience the same fate as France's Socialist Party or PASOK in Greece. In September 2017, the SPD obtained its worst electoral result since the Second World War. In the most recent poll, released on Monday, the SPD had just 17 percent support.

The Jusos, whose members are campaigning within the SPD in opposition to a grand coalition, have no disagreements with the SPD's policies of war and social cutbacks. "Of course, there are negotiating successes in the

document and that is of course why we do politics," Kühnert emphasised in his speech. It was no accident that Kühnert praised the neoliberal *Handelsblatt* newspaper as a potential enabler of a "revolt" to break the pact of the "dispirited" and the alleged "gridlock" of the grand coalition.

Prior to the beginning of official coalition talks, the ruling elite left no doubt about what it expects from the new government. Although the 28-page document summarising the results of exploratory talks calls for a continuation and intensification of the policies of militarism, strengthening of the domestic state apparatus and social cutbacks, and also adopted the right-wing Alternative for Germany's immigration policy, the scribblers in the editorial offices of the bourgeois press have attacked it from the right.

In a comment entitled "Blind spot on foreign policy," Klaus Dieter Frankenberger complained in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that the chapter in the document on "foreign developments and the German army" was so "thin" that "one is left speechless and baffled." Although the army is to be "better equipped," Frankenberger wrote that there was "no mention" of "NATO's 2 percent goal," i.e., to spend 2 percent of GDP on defence.

The key question which the "wannabe coalition partners" have to answer is, "How will Germany's role and interests be defined in a dramatically changing world? What will our policies look like against the authoritarian powers Russia and China, which the American national security strategy at least views as central challenges. How much importance will be ascribed to the relationship with America, with or without Trump?"

In other words, Germany's return to an aggressive great power in foreign policy, which the previous grand coalition unveiled at the 2014 Munich Security Conference, will be accelerated. Berlin is "called upon more than perhaps ever before," wrote *Handelsblatt*, and demanded "Germany's capacity for action." Acting Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel knows that "major decisions to determine the direction of foreign policy can no longer be delayed."

Just how "big" Germany's ruling elite is thinking, 75

years after their catastrophic defeat in the Second World War, was underscored by another article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* entitled, “At the nuclear abyss.” It urged the next government to seriously develop a “clear standpoint on nuclear policy” as an answer to the United States’ new nuclear strategy.

The article’s author, Wolfgang Riedischhäuser, the vice president of the Federal Academy for Security Policy, is not simply a crazed individual. In December, the director of the Berlin-based think tank Global Public Policy Institute, Torsten Benner, predicted that in 2018, Germany would “inevitably” confront a “debate on nuclear weapons.” Gabriel would then have to show if “he is really serious about ‘political-strategic thinking’,” he added.

In economic and social policy, entirely new ground will also be broken by the new government. Although Germany is already one of the most socially unequal countries in Europe--it was revealed on Tuesday that the richest 45 households own more than the bottom half of the population--the ruling class is demanding more mass lay-offs and social attacks.

The new federal government will be “in urgent need of advice on economic policy,” wrote *Handelsblatt* economist Bert Rürup. In the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union/SPD document on the results of exploratory talks, a “conceptual guiding principle” is missing, such as that which “Gerhard Schröder last had with the Agenda 2010,” added Rürup.

To enforce their anti-social, militarist policies, the ruling elite is resorting, as it did in the 1930s, to far-right and fascist forces. It was confirmed on Tuesday that, as the largest opposition party in parliament, the AfD will receive the post of chair of the parliamentary budget committee. The AfD nominated Peter Boehringer for the post. Boehringer is a neoliberal racist who warned in a series of blog posts about the threat posed by Islam and the danger of immigrants causing an “umvölkung” (a term developed by the Nazis to describe the loss of German identity among the people due to their assimilation by foreigners).

As the political conspiracy in Berlin has entered a new stage with the SPD’s vote to initiate coalition talks, the SGP renews its demand for new elections. Under present conditions, this is the only way for the working class to intervene into political events to prevent the installation of a right-wing government. In the election campaign, the SGP would mobilise all of its resources to build a socialist alternative to capitalism, war and authoritarianism, and expose the bourgeois parties’ true goals.

This also applies to the Left Party and Greens, whose leaders are part of the reactionary machinations behind the scenes. If the grand coalition takes up issues important to the

Greens, the party would be prepared to “hold talks” and consider temporary support for the government, said Green parliamentary leader Katrin Göring-Eckhardt. Her Left Party counterpart, Sara Wagenknecht, called for an “independent European foreign policy” on Monday as part of the commemorations to mark the 55th anniversary of the German-French Elysée treaty. As a model, she named former French President General de Gaulle, an authoritarian militarist and nationalist.

The SGP is the only party opposing the right-wing conspiracy from the left, calling for new elections and fighting for a socialist programme in the working class. The following demands are at the heart of this campaign:

- No to war! Stop Germany's return to aggressive great power politics!
- Expropriate the super-rich, the banks and the corporations! End poverty and exploitation--for social equality!
- Defend democratic rights and the right to asylum! No to increased state powers and surveillance!
- No to nationalism and the European Union! For the United Socialist States of Europe!

The most important prerequisite for the realisation of these demands is the construction of a new mass socialist party. We appeal to all workers and young people who oppose the attacks on jobs and wages and want to fight against war, poverty and oppression to contact the SGP and join the fight for socialism.

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>