

Reject German coalition pact! Make public all secret agreements!

Statement of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
10 February 2018

The coalition agreement reached February 7 between the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) lays the basis for the formation of the most right-wing government in Germany since the downfall of the Nazi regime. The incoming government represents the interests of the banks, the major corporations and the super-rich. It will continue the attacks on the working class and launch a massive military build-up at home and abroad.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) opposes such a government and calls for new elections. The grand coalition has no democratic legitimacy. It was rejected at the polls on September 24, 2017, and is now supported by less than a third of the electorate. It is the outcome of a conspiracy involving the banks, the employers' associations, the military, the intelligence agencies and the bourgeois parties. Sealed off from the public, their representatives have spent four-and-a-half months negotiating and intriguing to bring a right-wing government to power.

The working class has a right to know where the grand coalition is headed. This applies not only to the coalition agreement—the true contents of which are being concealed, sugarcoated and distorted by the media and the political parties—but also to the wide-ranging secret deals reached and the content of the discussions held behind the scenes. The SGP demands that all secret protocols and lists of participants in the coalition talks be published.

The 450,000 SPD members, who will vote on the coalition agreement in the coming weeks, have a right to know what was really agreed. They must demand that all details about the coalition negotiations be placed on the table. Otherwise, they will serve as dupes, signing off on policies of which they have not been informed or given the opportunity to assess.

A brief review of the coalition pact demonstrates that many agreements that would be met with strong opposition are merely hinted at. For example, the document states that Germany has an interest in being part of strategic

discussions about and procedural planning for nuclear weapons. In plain language, this can only mean that the grand coalition wants to have nuclear weapons.

What was agreed on this issue? Are there plans for the construction of a German atomic bomb? Has a deal been reached with French President Emmanuel Macron to secure German participation in France's "Force de frappe?" Macron's predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy, made Germany such an offer in 2007, but Chancellor Angela Merkel rejected it at the time.

In addition, the coalition agreement commits the government to "NATO's agreed upon capability goals" and the "best possible equipment" for the army's soldiers. But while the budgets for every other area of spending are carefully quantified and calculated, no figures are given on the military budget, even though much larger sums of money are involved.

What precisely was agreed upon? The grand coalition obviously intends to reach NATO's goal of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence, which would correspond to a doubling of the annual military budget to €70-80 billion.

What spending cuts will this entail, given the commitment to a balanced budget and the refusal to increase taxes on the rich? What will be the consequences for social outlays and proposed additional spending, which throughout the entire legislative period will amount to €46 billion, or around €12 billion per year? Has a new "agenda" policy, modeled on the Agenda 2010 cost-cutting programme, been agreed?

One can point to dozens of similar passages in the text which are unclear or designed to keep the reader in the dark.

A campaign led by the media and the SPD leadership is underway to conceal the agreement's reactionary character. There is hardly any reporting on the military and foreign policy goals indicated in the deal, even though they are its central concern. Instead, secondary issues are being blown out of all proportion, and band aid measures, such as an increase in child benefit of €25 over four years, are being hailed as great social reforms.

Every line in the 177-page document is steeped in the

spirit of the military, the intelligence agencies and the think tanks that have for years been calling for a revival of German militarism and a European great power policy. Central to this is Germany's return to an aggressive and militarist foreign policy and the transformation of the European Union, in cooperation with France, into a military alliance armed to the teeth.

The document identifies countries, regions and entire continents that are once again viewed as belonging to German imperialism's sphere of influence—from the Western Balkans to Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Persian Gulf and North Africa, as well as the rest of Africa, Latin America and Asia.

The CDU/CSU and SPD have agreed to extend the army's current military interventions, take "further steps towards an 'army of Europeans,'" and accelerate the "already-begun renewal, modernisation and expansion of the army."

The austerity policies of previous governments, which threw millions of workers into poverty and unemployment, are to be continued in Germany and throughout Europe. The agreement pledges to maintain a balanced budget and stick to the European stability and growth pact.

Domestically, the grand coalition plans to erect a police state to suppress the mounting opposition among workers and young people to social attacks, militarism and war. The catalogue of measures being demanded includes close to 15,000 new employees for the intelligence agencies at the state and federal level, and 2,000 new employees for the judiciary. The document also calls for the militarisation of the police, expansion of video surveillance, strengthening of the intelligence services and expansion of Internet surveillance. With the nomination of CSU leader Horst Seehofer to head the Interior Ministry, to be relabeled Homeland (Heimat) Ministry, a hard-line law-and-order domestic policy will be assured.

On refugee policy, the coalition agreement adopts the demands of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Annual immigration will be limited to 180,000 to 220,000 people, asylum seekers will be confined in centralised camps, those required by law to leave will be ruthlessly deported, and the internal and external EU borders will be sealed off.

There is a long and disastrous tradition in Germany of conspiracies and secret deals. The end of the Weimar Republic was dominated by such machinations. Already three years before Hitler came to power, succeeding governments no longer relied on parliament, but rather on emergency decrees and presidential edicts. Anyone who denounced rearmament, like Carl von Ossietzky, wound up in prison.

Then on January 30, 1933, a clique around President Paul

von Hindenburg, backed by the major industrialists, the military and other reactionary forces, named Adolf Hitler as chancellor, even though his party had suffered a severe electoral setback two months earlier.

Under conditions of a deepening global crisis of capitalism, mounting conflicts with the US, China and Russia, and the danger of a wider war in the Middle East and war in East Asia, German imperialism is resorting to the criminal methods of the past. This is made clear in the coalition agreement, which states: "New strategic priorities for the United States, the rise of China, and Russia's policy make clear that Europe must take its fate into its hands more than ever before."

We call upon all SPD members voting in the coming days on the coalition agreement to oppose it. A continuation of the grand coalition to prepare for war and new social attacks cannot be permitted.

However, the right-wing conspiracy, which is supported by all the parliamentary parties and large sections of the European bourgeoisie, can be stopped only by the independent political mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a socialist programme. The strikes in the automotive and electrical industries in recent weeks demonstrated the militant potential that exists in the working class.

But the IG Metall union did everything in its power to shut down the strikes on the eve of the publication of the coalition agreement. The German Trade Union Confederation and its member unions are among the strongest advocates of a grand coalition and its right-wing policies.

In the coming weeks, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei will wage an intensive campaign in the working classes and at schools and universities to expose the reactionary machinations of the ruling class. Together with its sister parties in France and Britain, the SGP will build a powerful socialist movement throughout Europe against war, dictatorship and capitalism. The demands for the publication of all secret agreements and for new elections are important steps in this process.

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