

German grand coalition shifts sharply to the right

By Johannes Stern
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The new German grand coalition is the most right-wing government in Berlin since the downfall of the Nazi regime. This assessment made by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) has already been confirmed in the first days following the re-election of Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democrats, CDU). The government is deliberately stoking a racist atmosphere in order to further its policies of militarism, social attacks and the strengthening of the repressive state apparatus.

The new minister of the interior and homeland, Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU), had barely taken office before he launched a campaign of agitation against the 5 million Muslims living in Germany. “Islam doesn’t belong to Germany,” he stated in the right-wing *Bild* newspaper on Friday. He defended his statement in the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper, stating, “Nobody can seriously deny that Germany, historically and culturally, was shaped by Judaeo-Christian ideas and not Islam.” He appealed for a “master plan” to deport refugees more quickly, the concentration of refugees in so-called anchor centres and stricter border controls to “prevent people from crossing borders illegally.”

Everyone in Germany knows the traditions Seehofer and the grand coalition are drawing on when they make such statements and plans. In the early 1920s, the Nazi Party (NSDAP) declared in its 25-point programme that Judaism did not belong in Germany. The Nazis pledged “to prevent...all non-Germans from immigrating.” A few years later, when Hitler was in power, this programme was gradually implemented in practice.

In 1935, the Nazis made Jewish citizens second-class citizens with the Nuremberg laws and then steadily stepped up their persecution. In the summer of 1938,

the Nazis introduced the order on the “General Domestic Police-Issued Identification Card,” which all men capable of bearing arms had to show. All Jews were then compelled on September 1, 1941 to wear the yellow star, a measure that prepared their mass deportation and extermination.

Seehofer is not Hitler, and the grand coalition is not a fascist regime of terror, but given Germany’s history, the alarm bells should be ringing. Three years ago, *Der Spiegel* was forced to acknowledge in a comment entitled “Rhetorically fascist” that the then-Bavarian minister president “with his choice of words employs the rhetoric of the National Socialists” and “promotes totalitarian ways of thinking.”

Today, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is represented in parliament and celebrates the fact that the grand coalition has adopted its right-wing extremist programme. “We have been saying for a long time that Islam does not belong to Germany. This declaration was originally the AfD’s line and is being plagiarised by the CSU, much like other aspects of domestic security policy,” stated AfD leader Alexander Gauland.

The grand coalition’s adoption of the AfD’s racist-charged law-and-order policies is inseparable from its resort to an aggressive great-power foreign policy.

Under new Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (Social Democrats, SPD), Germany has swung over to an anti-Russian line much like the position it took four years ago during the Ukraine crisis. In a joint statement last Thursday issued together with the United States, Britain and France, the German government backed the British measures sanctions adopted in the Skripal case and the war threats against Russia. Although London has yet to provide a shred of evidence, and the entire campaign stinks to high heaven, the statement declared

that Russia is “with a high degree of probability” responsible for “the first offensive use of a nerve gas in Europe since the Second World War.”

Sharp divisions exist within the ruling class on this issue, but all factions agree that Germany has to pursue a great-power policy. Maas’s predecessor, Sigmar Gabriel, described the current accusations against Russia as “scurrilous suspicions” and “conspiracy theories,” because he does not want Germany to be subordinated to the foreign policy interests of Britain and the United States.

In his farewell speech, Gabriel appealed for a more aggressive imperialist foreign policy and based himself as he has done many times before on the Humboldt University Professor Herfried Münkler. One should “not be satisfied with giving normative answers, or feel good when citing one’s own values.” The “formulation” and “enforcement of our interests” is necessary, “politically, socially, economically and ultimately also militarily,” Gabriel stated.

The debate over the extension and expansion of the German army’s military interventions in Africa and Central Asia and the Middle East in parliament last Thursday underscored that the so-called opposition parties agree on this war policy in all its essentials. For the AfD, former German army soldier and consultant in the Defence Ministry Rüdiger Lukassen stated, “My parliamentary group wants the army to be fully equipped ready for deployment before the next mandate begins. When you can report that, Mrs. Minister, we can send our soldiers on missions, including combat missions.”

Green Party foreign policy spokesperson Omit Nouripour embraced the government’s plan to deploy the army throughout Iraq in the future. Islamic State is “on the retreat,” but it must “continue to be fought by military means,” he told the deputies. It is therefore “entirely appropriate to support the efforts of Haider al-Abadi to hold Iraq together.”

The Left Party also wants to strengthen German imperialist influence in the Middle East, but it is appealing for a more hostile stance towards Turkey and closer cooperation with the Kurdish militias in Syria. The government’s “declared goal” of combatting Islamic State sounds “at least initially honourable,” stated Sevim Dagdelen, who is the Left Party’s representative on the parliamentary foreign affairs

committee. But it is “simply dishonest,” because the government is simultaneously standing “on the side of NATO member Turkey, which with German tanks and the support of bands of Islamist murderers is crushing and shooting down those in Syria who have fought most decisively for years against the ‘Islamic State’.”

On domestic policy, the Left Party attacks the grand coalition from the right. At the weekend, Left Party parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht described the grand coalition’s first days on Twitter as “scandalous,” because in the ministries more than 200 posts “in police and customs [will be] eliminated...at the expense of citizens’ security.” Prior to this, Wagenknecht welcomed the racist decision by the Essen branch of the Tafel charity to accept only Germans into its food distribution programme for a period of time.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei warned four years ago: “The propaganda of the post-war era—that Germany had learnt from the terrible crimes of the Nazis, had ‘arrived at the West,’ had embraced a peaceful foreign policy, and had developed into a stable democracy—is exposed as lies. German imperialism is once again showing its real colours as it emerged historically, with all of its aggressiveness at home and abroad.”

The grand coalition’s right-wing offensive demonstrates how far advanced this dangerous development has become. At the same time, with its campaign in recent weeks against the grand coalition and for new elections, the SGP has established itself as the only left-wing and socialist opposition. The SGP will now fight to develop and organise the resistance of workers and youth to militarism, war, racism, and social attacks on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme.

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