

Berlin state election 2016

Vote against war! Vote PSG!

Election manifesto of the Socialist Equality Party

1 August 2016

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, Socialist Equality Party) is standing a statewide list and constituency candidates in Wedding, Tempelhof-Schöneberg and Friedrichshain for the Berlin Senate (state legislature) election on September 18.

Our campaign is aimed at all those who are not prepared to accept the return of German militarism, the growth of poverty and the rise of the far right. We are combining the fight against war with the struggle against social inequality, rearmament and xenophobia, and advocate a socialist alternative to capitalism.

Against the growth of nationalism and the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), we counterpose internationalism in the interests of the working class. We fight for the global unity of all workers, regardless of race, nationality, color or religion. We are building an international anti-war movement, and, as the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), work closely with our sister parties around the world.

The Berlin election is taking place in a situation of exceptional crisis. The world resembles a powder keg, with one financial crisis following another. The European Union is disintegrating. The facade of democracy is crumbling, as states of emergency prevail in France and Turkey. The crisis of capitalism is throwing up right-wing and fascistic figures—Donald Trump in the US, Marine Le Pen in France, Norbert Hofer in Austria and the AfD in Germany, all spreading the poison of nationalism and xenophobia.

All the specters of the past have returned: economic crisis, mass poverty, dictatorship and preparations for war. It was long considered unthinkable that Germany—of all countries—would once again boast of its military power and lay claim to being hegemon of Europe and a world power. Now, the old megalomania, which twice plunged Europe and the world into the abyss, is back.

Military spending is being stepped up. The number of German military missions abroad is increasing. The Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) are being used worldwide to guarantee “the unhindered use of land, air and sea” as the new “White Paper on Security Policy” declares.

Everyone in Germany knows where this leads: to war crimes and mass murder. In Berlin, it is impossible to walk a step without being reminded of the terrible consequences of Germany’s last “grab for world power,” as described by historian Fritz Fischer, who exposed the continuity of German military policy from the Kaiser in WWI, to Hitler in WWII. The walls of many of the capital’s buildings are still riddled with bullet and shrapnel holes. Thousands of memorial cobblestones recall the mass deportation of Berlin’s Jews during the Second World War.

Despite all this, Germany’s elites are determined to turn Berlin into the capital of militarism once again. A veritable war conspiracy is unfolding in the Chancellery, the foreign and defence ministries, the political parties, think tanks, foundations and in the media. At Berlin’s premier

academic institution, Humboldt University, professors are busy playing down the crimes of German imperialism in both the First and Second World Wars.

The establishment parties have been brought into line. All of them defend the interests of the billionaires, while their programs are virtually interchangeable. Any of these parties could form a coalition with any other.

The PSG opposes this political cartel. We are not seeking a place in a coalition government. We do not appeal to the “reason” and “desire for peace” of the ruling class, but to the readiness of working people and youth to fight. Our aim is not the reform of capitalism, but its abolition.

The crisis of capitalism is unleashing major class struggles. Our election campaign is aimed at winning workers and youth to an international socialist program and preparing them for revolution. Only the intervention of millions of people into political events can put an end to the irresponsible policies of social cuts and military rearmament.

In the past, Berlin was not only the capital of militarism and Nazi terror, it was also the center of the socialist movement and revolutionary struggle. Here, 100 years ago, socialist leader Karl Liebknecht called on workers to take up the fight against the mass slaughter of the First World War.

Given the return of mass poverty, militarism and war, the working class must draw upon its socialist traditions. In this situation, the construction of the PSG is a matter of great urgency. It is not enough to be angry about the social crisis and those politically responsible for it. It is high time to build a socialist counter-movement.

Our election campaign is focused on three demands:

Stop the war conspiracy!

“As long as capitalism exists, wars are inevitable.” These words of Karl Liebknecht are being vindicated again today. Not since the Second World War has the world stood so close to nuclear inferno.

The US and its European allies have reduced much of the Middle East and North Africa to ruins and forced millions to flee. In Eastern Europe, NATO is organizing a massive military deployment against Russia, a nuclear power. In Africa, a new struggle between the imperialist powers for resources and spheres of influence is underway. In Asia, under the rubric of its “Pivot to Asia,” the US is preparing for war against China.

In the fight for the re-division of the world and the hunt for raw materials and markets, Germany’s ruling elites want to ensure that they are not left empty handed. At the beginning of 2014, the German government announced an “end to military restraint.” Since then, its military interventions have proceeded ever more rapidly. The Bundeswehr is now at the forefront of NATO’s deployment against Russia, and in the wars in the Middle East and Africa.

While wages and social spending are falling, military spending is increasing. The military budget is to be almost doubled, from 1.2 to 2

percent of gross domestic product. In the future, an additional €130 billion will be spent on weapons and a sophisticated “cyber army,” with 13,500 soldiers involved.

These objectives are supported by all the parliamentary parties--the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens and the Left Party. In 1998, the Greens abandoned their pacifist program in order to enter into the federal government and have since become the leading political advocates of war. The Left Party is now preparing to follow the same path. To this end, Bodo Ramelow, its state premier in Thuringia emphasized in the weekly newspaper *Der Spiegel*, “We are not pacifists.” And, in an interview this summer, the Left Party’s parliamentary leader Sahra Wagenknecht assured broadcaster ZDF, “Of course, Germany will not leave NATO once we join a government.”

- The PSG is the only party that uncompromisingly rejects militarism and war. We are for the dissolution of the Bundeswehr and all the intelligence agencies.

- We reject all imperialist alliances and military blocs. We are for the dissolution of NATO and the European Union, and fight instead for the United Socialist States of Europe. In the struggle against American and German militarism, our ally is the American and international working class.

- A new anti-war movement can only be successful if it is international, based on the working class and combines the fight against war with the struggle against capitalism.

Put an end to poverty and social inequality!

We reject the implementation of austerity measures to save the banks and to finance war and militarism. They serve only to enrich the financial aristocracy while bankrupting the welfare state.

For decades, social inequality has been growing. In Germany, one of the richest countries in the world, more than 12 million people live in poverty. Children have been particularly hard hit. As a result of the Agenda 2010 welfare and labour “reforms,” introduced by the SPD-Green Party government, 8 million people now work under precarious conditions. By 2030, one in two new pensioners will receive only a pittance, despite a lifetime of work. The employers’ associations are already calling for the retirement age to be raised to 73.

In contrast, a tiny minority lives in the lap of luxury. These parasites have been enriched immeasurably at the expense of the majority. Income from corporate-owned assets has increased by more than 30 percent in the past 15 years. Meanwhile, one-third of all private assets are owned by just 1 percent of the population. In contrast, the poorest 30 percent own nothing, or are in debt.

The situation is particularly dramatic in Berlin. Germany’s “capital of poverty” (Tagesspiegel) heads the table for child poverty; the income of public service workers is 10 percent lower than the national average; one-third of jobs in the public sector have been destroyed in recent years; the number of temporary workers has increased by almost 120 percent.

The grotesque growth of social inequality is testimony to the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. The fairytale of the “social market economy,” supposedly creating social justice and prosperity for all, has long been dispelled. The gigantic fortunes of billionaires have resulted not from growing prosperity, but from social redistribution and speculation.

In 2008, it was such criminal speculation that drove the global economy to the brink of disaster. Since then, nothing has been resolved. The bursting of the next bubble is inevitable. As with a terminal cancer patient, the point has long passed where a cure is possible. The capitalists know only one means of defending their billions: increased exploitation, cuts in social spending, the selling off of state property and war.

Capitalism cannot be reformed. It must be abolished and replaced with a socialist society. Without wresting control of the economy away from the financial aristocracy, not a single social problem can be solved.

- Not a man, not a woman and not a cent for militarism and war!
- Instead of austerity measures to rescue the banks--expropriate the banks and transfer them into public ownership under democratic control.
- The vast resources now being squandered to enrich a tiny minority must be utilized to provide high-quality jobs for all, develop infrastructure, improve education and social services, and lift the cultural level of society as a whole.

Defend democratic rights!

Militarism and social inequality cannot be reconciled with democracy. In the 1930s, Germany’s elites reacted to the global economic crisis by handing power to Hitler. Now, they are once again preparing emergency measures and dictatorship.

Their pretext is the fight against “terrorism.” But terrorist attacks themselves are a result of the policy of war. Al Qaeda and Islamic State were built up by the Western intelligence agencies against unpopular regimes and were only able to spread as a result of the wars in Iraq and Syria.

The real target of increased state powers is the working class. These powers are being used to intimidate and repress opposition. The ruling class is alarmed by the worldwide rise in labor disputes, and anticipates fierce opposition to its policies of militarism and war.

Preparations for emergency measures and dictatorship are well advanced. A gigantic surveillance apparatus has arisen, based upon the anti-terrorism laws. The police and intelligence agencies work closely together, and the Bundeswehr is preparing to use them domestically, even though the constitution prohibits both. In Berlin, state Interior Minister Frank Henkel (CDU) is conducting a rigorous law-and-order campaign.

The attack on democratic rights is most evident in the despicable witch-hunting of refugees. The right to asylum has been mutilated beyond recognition. Desperate people fleeing the wars in the Middle East and Africa are being mistreated, herded into prison camps and deported. Hundreds are drowning in the Mediterranean every month.

The smear campaign against Muslims, fueled by all the official parties and leading media outlets, calls to mind the Jew-baiting of the Nazis. It fulfills the same purpose. It is meant to divide the working class, and is grist to the mill of the AfD.

- The PSG defends all democratic rights and the right to asylum. The attacks on refugees are aimed against all workers. That is why it is necessary to develop a common struggle of all workers in Germany—indigenous and migrant—against capitalism and war.

- We are for the dissolution of all the intelligence agencies and their monitoring apparatus.

- Real democracy is only possible if the big corporations and banks can no longer dictate society and social inequality is overcome.

Workers need their own party

The deeper the divisions in society, the closer the establishment parties close ranks. They are all partners in a veritable conspiracy to enforce the policies of war and social attacks.

The SPD is quite rightly hated. Built by workers in the past, and still claiming to defend social and democratic gains, it does the opposite. SPD Chancellor Schröder’s Agenda 2010 has plunged millions of working families into utter hardship and misery. Today, when the SPD talks about reforms, it means imposing cuts in wages and social spending to increase profits, police state powers and militarism.

The same is true of the Left Party. It has demonstrated this during its 10 years in coalition with the SPD in Berlin. No other state government in Germany has carried out such massive cuts in wages and benefits, while signing guarantees worth billions for the bankrupt Berliner Bankgesellschaft. The Left Party has turned Berlin into the capital of poverty. In Greece, its sister party, Syriza, has ruined the lives of millions with its brutal austerity program.

The Berlin election is seen as a trial run in laying the foundations for an

SPD-Left Party-Green coalition at the federal level, a so-called red-red-green government. Such an administration would not represent progress. In 1998, the SPD and Greens formed a coalition, which sent the Bundeswehr on foreign combat missions for the first time since World War Two, and cut wages and benefits. Now this alliance is to be revitalized using the Left Party in order to impose the next round of social cuts and pave the way for further German militarism.

Together, the right-wing policies of the SPD and the Left Party have facilitated the rise of the AfD. This ultra-right party is only able to present itself as a social opposition because of the absence of an opposition from the left. It exploits anger and disappointment with the broken campaign promises of the SPD and the Left Party for its own reactionary purposes. Marine Le Pen in France and Donald Trump in the US function in a similar manner. Those who want to fight the AfD must break with the SPD and the Left Party.

To intervene independently in political events, workers need their own party. That is why the construction of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit is crucial. Our strength is based on the historical tradition that we embody, and the principles that we represent. As a section of the ICFI, we stand in the traditions of Marxism—the original SPD of August Bebel, Rosa Luxembourge and Karl Liebknecht, the Russian Revolution and the Left Opposition of Leon Trotsky against Stalinism.

Support the election campaign of the PSG!

Our election campaign in Berlin is part of the struggle to build an international movement against war and capitalism.

We are organizing public meetings with representatives of the ICFI in Europe and the US to discuss our program. We will explain what socialism really is and the lessons to be drawn from Stalinism and the dissolution of the former East Germany and the Soviet Union.

We call on everyone to support our campaign. Take part in the active struggle for socialism! This campaign is not just about votes, it is about building a socialist party that fights against war and capitalism.

There are many ways that you can participate. Distribute our election material. Organize a meeting in your area. Make the campaign known among your friends and colleagues. Donate to the PSG, so that we can conduct the most ambitious campaign possible.

To all those fighting for their jobs and their standard of living; to all young people to whom capitalism offers no future, and who do not want to die in new wars, we say: This is your campaign! Get involved today!

Find out how you can support the campaign by visiting our website gleichheit.de.

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>