

The German Elections: Letters and e-mails ask more about the Socialist Equality Party and its policies

5 September 1998

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party---PSG) has received over 120 letters and e-mails so far regarding its participation in the federal elections on September 27. They have come from all parts of Germany. And even further afield: a group of Danish students, who found the PSG web site on the Internet, wrote asking how the influence of right-wing extremists among the youth can be opposed.

The following are some representative excerpts. The replies have also been edited slightly for publication on the WSWWS.

An e-mail from Diez/Lahn

Please send me your election programme and arguments why some one should vote for the PSG.

What is the main difference today between a communist party such as the PSG and the communist parties of the 1970s?

WS

Answer:

Thank you for your interest in the programme of the PSG, which we enclose with this letter.

In answer to your questions:

(1) Why vote for the PSG?

The PSG is participating in the elections as a political alternative to the parties presently represented in the Bundestag, and to build such an alternative. None of the parties there represent the interests of the millions who are effected by the social crisis. The election is like choosing between the plague or cholera. Regardless who becomes the next chancellor, the attacks on working people will continue.

The working class urgently needs a new party to intervene into political events and oppose the attacks of the present and future government. The building of such a party and the discussion of its programme is the reason why the PSG is standing in the elections.

The Election Manifesto and the Programme & Perspectives of the PSG, which we enclose, provide more extensive arguments in answer to your question.

(2) What is the main difference between the PSG and the 'communist' parties of the 1970s?

First and foremost it is the irreconcilable difference between Trotskyism and Stalinism. What principally distinguished our movement in the 1970s from all those 'communist' groups was that we never glorified Stalin, Mao Zedong or any other supposed 'natural' revolutionaries such as Castro or Che Guevara.

There were many reasons why Stalinism exercised such an attraction for students at that time. A central role was played by the 'Cultural Revolution' of 1966/67 and Mao's glorification of Stalin that accompanied it. The 'Cultural Revolution' was mystified by students. At the same time its orientation to the peasantry and the urban lumpen proletariat seemed to confirm their conceptions of a non-proletarian path to socialism. The common factor between the students and the 'communist' groups was that

they both completely wrote off the working class as a revolutionary force.

The 'Cultural Revolution' was completely counter-revolutionary and it threw China back decades in its development. Artists, musicians and intellectuals, as well as scientists, doctors and engineers were mercilessly persecuted and prevented from following their careers, which had catastrophic consequences for the mass of the population. Any expression of culture was slandered as 'bourgeois'.

We shall be publishing articles in *Gleichheit* about the 'Che Guevara Myth' and on Castro's Cuba. The articles will also be available from our web site.

I hope that this goes some way to answering your questions and we would welcome any further questions or to hear your own views.

Elisabeth Zimmermann (for the PSG)

A letter from Braunschweig

Your party is standing candidates in Braunschweig. The *Parkbank Zeitung* [a newspaper produced by the homeless] would like to ask you the following questions. We will be publishing your answers in the September issue of our paper.

(1) There are presently some 860,000 homeless in Germany. This figure is rising even though there are many empty apartments and houses. What would you do to resolve this situation?

(2) The number of people receiving welfare is currently around 3,500,000. What measures would you take to reduce this high figure?

(3) One of the biggest problems today is the high level of unemployment. Some 4,500,000 have no jobs. What would you do about this?

Yours sincerely,

H-J.M. (Parkbank Zeitung)

Answer:

Thank you for your letter. Here are our answers.

(1) The PSG advocates a publicly-funded construction programme. This would mean the building of sufficient quality accommodation to meet the needs of all. Apartments and houses which are presently unoccupied because landlords demand such high rents should be taken under public control and made available to those without accommodation or with insufficient room.

(2 and 3) The PSG advances a programme of emergency measures: to organise a necessary and useful scheme of public works. This would provide all unemployed with well-paid new jobs. We reject the economic programme of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which promotes low-wage jobs and seeks to couple the receipt of welfare to enforced labour schemes.

As an immediate measure to create millions of new jobs, the working week must be reduced to 30 hours with no loss in wages. Workers who are sacked must continue to receive their full wages until they have found an equivalent job.

At the same time, we advocate a considerable improvement in the provision of welfare and social benefits. The first step must be the reversal of all previous cuts in health care, pensions, welfare, unemployment benefits and in public housing provision. Single parents and needy families must receive a guaranteed minimum income to ensure no child grows up in poverty.

Yours sincerely

PSG

An e-mail

The elections approach and we are discussing them in our school in our Social Science class. There are many parties and most of the students taking this class will be voting for the first time.

For this reason I would like to know your views and opinions on the following themes:

(1) Unemployment, (2) The environment, (3) Tax reform

I look forward to your reply.

Stephanie R

Answer:

Thank you for your interest in our party. Below you will find a brief response to the themes you mentioned. As a socialist party we believe that it is not the company balance sheets which should decide important social questions, such as employment or the environment, but the interests of the population.

(1) [see 2/3 in the letter above]

(2) Environment

We believe that a sound environment and healthy food are fundamental interests for working people. However, in the interests of the profit system the natural, human and technical resources of the planet are ruthlessly exploited. At the same time, research and development are subordinated to the profits of industry. Industries such as auto and oil oppose the development of alternative energy sources.

(3) We think the present tax system needs more than just a few reforms. We do not agree with the call by all the big parties in Bonn to cut the top rate of tax. This only means that those who already have the most money would get even more. Under present conditions the cut being discussed in the lower rates of tax (which is not very probable) would mean cuts in other social programmes.

In order to gather the necessary money to overcome social misery, the taxes on wealth and high earners must be drastically raised. Also, the banks and big corporations must be taken under public control.

[NB: By high earners, we mean those with more than 15 or 20 thousand deutschmarks a month (\$8,500 to \$11,300 a month).]

Yours sincerely,

Dietmar Gaisenkersting (for the PSG)

A letter from Frankfurt an der Oder (on the east German border with Poland)

We have formed a non-partisan 'Election Discussion Group' to encourage a 'conscious vote'. Our Internet Homepage will certainly be seen by some 150 scientists of the European University of Viadrina (Frankfurt/Oder).

In order to inform our colleagues at the university we have formulated the following five questions which we have sent to all parties standing candidates in Brandenburg and Berlin.

(1) The universities in Germany are in general need of reform. What measures would you take in this context?

(2) Which innovative areas in research, development and application would you promote?

(3) What concrete measure would you undertake in order to reduce unemployment?

(4) How would you define the social market economy?

(5) What makes your party especially worthy of a vote?

Thank you in advance for your efforts.

Yours sincerely

C.C.G.

Answer:

Thank you for your letter and questions. Our answers are as follows:

(1) The term 'reform' today stands for every sort of social retrogression. The same applies in education. The university regulations aim at creating more competition between universities and at promoting private universities. Education is being subordinated to the interests of big business and made a privilege of the rich. The PSG rejects such 'reforms'. We are for an improvement in the financing and staffing of all universities. A non-repayable grant should cover students' living costs and so allow them to concentrate fully on their studies.

(2) The PSG welcomes every innovation in science and technology. The question which areas should be promoted must be decided by experts. The greatest problem with science today is that the urgent research needed in such areas as environmental protection, medicine and food production are subordinated to the profit interest and not the needs of society as a whole.

(3) [see 2/3 in the letter above]

(4) The 'social market economy' was an attempt to limit the anarchy of the market through state intervention and the establishment of a degree of social equilibrium. Globalisation no longer permits this. The general march towards 'pure capitalism', which all the parties in Bonn follow, including the PDS (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus--Party of Democratic Socialism, the former Stalinist party of state in East Germany), illustrates the failure of this model.

(5) The PSG is part of a world party--the Fourth International--and stands for an international strategy. The party was founded 60 years ago by Leon Trotsky to defend the original ideals and aims of the socialist movement against the rise of a Stalinist dictatorship. The PSG advocates the formation of a workers government, to represent the interests of the majority of the population and which can only act with their active support.

We hope that this answers your questions.

Yours sincerely

Justus Leicht (for the PSG)

See the election web site of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party--PSG)

[In German]

See Also:

Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party) Election Programme 1998:

For an independent political movement of the working class

[28 August 1998]



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact