

Socialist Equality Party receives over 15,000 votes in German elections

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The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party of Germany) won a total of 15,365 votes in the German parliamentary (Bundestag) election held on September 18. The PSG stood candidates in four of Germany's sixteen states.

The total vote represents a considerable increase compared to previous election results for the party. In the Bundestag election of 1998 the PSG stood in six states and received a total of 6,226 votes, and in the European election of 2004 the PSG won 25,824 votes spread across all of Germany's 16 states.

The following votes were recorded for the state lists of the PSG (the results of the European election of 2004 are given in brackets):

Berlin 1,618 [1,404]

Saxony 6,368 [3,472]

Hessian 3,311 [1,448]

North Rhine-Westphalia 4,068 [3,828]

Compared to the European election of June last year, the PSG was able to increase its vote in the four states where it stood candidates by 50 percent, with the party doubling its vote in Hessian and Saxony. The PSG's final total will inevitably increase, as citizens in one ward in Dresden, in the state of Saxony, will vote for the Bundestag on October 2, following the death of a local parliamentary candidate.

If the result for the four states where the PSG stood were projected on a national basis (all 16 states), the PSG would have between 45,000 and 50,000 votes.

Compared to the results for the larger political parties the total for the PSG is small, but it nevertheless represents an important increase in the number of voters who cast their ballot for a socialist perspective. There can be no doubt that in most cases this was a very conscious decision. Anyone seeking merely to lodge a protest vote against the major parties could have voted for the recently formed Left Party, led by Oskar Lafontaine and Gregor

Gysi, which set out to win such protest votes.

From the start of the election campaign the PSG made unmistakably clear that it rejected the national reformist perspective of the Left Party and sought to mobilize the working class independently of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Left Party on the basis of a socialist program. It explained that its aim was to take forward the building of the Fourth International as the international party of the working class. The 15,000 votes for this program express a growth of socialist consciousness within the working class.

In cities and regions with high unemployment in the state of Saxony, the PSG was able to win support from between 0.3 and 0.4 percent of the electorate. The PSG received 752 votes in the city of Leipzig, 460 votes in Saxony-Switzerland and 497 votes in Kamenz/Hoyerswerda.

The percentage was lower in other German states, but significant support was also evident in these parts of the Federal Republic. In the capital city of Berlin the PSG received its best results in constituencies in the east of the city (prior to 1989, part of the Stalinist-controlled German Democratic Republic). The PSG obtained 226 votes in Mahrzahn, 186 votes in Lichtenberg, and 152 votes in Pankow.

In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the PSG polled 238 votes in Cologne and 194 in Dortmund. In the state of Hessian, the party gained 200 votes in Frankfurt, 171 in Hanau, 164 in Darmstadt and 143 in Offenbach.

It is also significant that the PSG was also able to win substantially more support than another party which calls itself socialist—Germany's Maoist organization, the MLPD (Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany). The MLPD openly defends Stalinism and Maoism and links this to an opportunist adaptation to the trade union bureaucracy.

Prior to the election it had offered to cooperate with the Left Party and withdraw its own candidates, but the latter

turned the offer down. In the event, the MLPD put up candidates in all sixteen states and carried out an intensive election campaign in which it spent some 400,000 euros (according to its own data)—a sum which far exceeded the amount spent by the PSG.

Nevertheless, the MLPD received far fewer votes than the PSG in Berlin, Saxony and Hessian. In Saxony, the Maoist party obtained just half of the PSG total. The organization was able to win just a few hundred votes more than the PSG in the state of North-Rhine/Westphalia, where it has its headquarters.

The 15,000 votes for the PSG represent an important step forward in the fight for a socialist program and a confirmation of the political analysis and perspective of the party. The strength of the PSG's election campaign lay in its ability to explain the roots of the social and political crisis to working people and familiarize them with an international socialist program. Its campaign stood in stark contrast to the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party, whose programs accept the capitalist system and maintain that it is possible to defend the social interests of the working class within a national framework.

The PSG was able to initiate a significant political debate, which was reflected in the dozens of emails, questions and letters sent to the PSG web site. In addition, the PSG held a series of campaign meetings in such major cities as Leipzig, Frankfurt, Dortmund, Berlin and Bielefeld, which were characterized by a high level of political discussion and interest in a revolutionary socialist program.

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