

German Socialist Equality Party certified to stand candidates in Berlin

Our correspondent
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At its meeting July 21, the state election committee confirmed the participation of the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG) for the Berlin state election due on September 17. The PSG will be standing three candidates: PSG national secretary Ulrich Rippert, and Fabian Reymann and Christoph Vandreier.

The election committee confirmed that the state list submitted by the PSG, comprising 2,200 authenticated signatures of support, was “formally correct and (delivered) within the prescribed period.” The signatures had been collected by teams of PSG members and supporters in the course of an intensive month-long campaign. The campaign revealed profound levels of dissatisfaction with the current city administration and a readiness to support a genuine socialist alternative.

A total of 23 parties were ratified to take part in the state election. According to the returning officer, Andreas Schmidt von Puskás, this is the highest total of parties to take part in the election since the reunification of Germany in 1990. The previous highest level of participation was in 1995, when a total of 17 parties stood for election. In the state elections of 2001 just 13 parties put up candidates.

A total of eight parties were rejected by the election committee, four because they had failed to submit the necessary number of signatures, and another four on the basis of formal irregularities, e.g., where a party had registered to take part but then simply failed to produce any signatures.

A number of far-right organizations are amongst the certified parties—including the Republicans, the German National Party (NPD), and the right-wing Law and Order Offensive Party.

On the left the Socialist Equality Party is the only party standing to challenge the Left Party-Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), which has been a coalition partner in the German state government for the past four years, and the

Election Alternative for Employment and Social Justice (WASG) organisation. The PDS has earned the scorn and anger of broad layers of the city’s population due to its anti-social policies, which it has implemented in Berlin in coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD). For its part, the Election Alternative makes some criticisms of PDS policies in Berlin but its main political line remains unification with the Left Party-PDS at the national level.

Other parties, such as the German Communist Party (DKP) and the Maoist MLPD, are hanging onto the coattails of the Left Party and support the latter’s campaign, although the Left Party refused to admit the MLPD into its ranks.

Authorisation for the election is the signal for the PSG to commence an intensive election campaign which makes clear the urgency of a socialist perspective and seeks to develop a broad discussion on such a political alternative. In so doing the PSG stresses that the Berlin elections have to be considered in the light of profound changes in the international situation.

The PSG election campaign begins this week with a meeting in Berlin which will discuss the implications of the brutal offensive being waged by Israel on the population of Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. Israel’s deliberate military strikes are aimed at destroying the infrastructure of both regions and threaten to embroil the entire Middle East in war.

The fact that German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union) and her foreign affairs minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD), have decided to unconditionally back the Israeli-American war policy is a politically criminal act. In doing so they strengthen the most reactionary elements in international politics and encourage new military adventures with devastating consequences. There are already reports of plans to extend the military offensive to include Syria and Iran.

In this situation the mobilization of the working class on

the basis of a socialist perspective is of decisive significance.

This is the basis for the participation of the PSG in the Berlin state election. In its election manifesto the PSG declares: “Our participation is a step toward the construction of an international party that opposes war, defends democratic rights, and fights for social equality and the eradication of poverty.”

The PSG stresses the close relationship between social issues and the fight against war: “Our aim is not to reform capitalism or beg for alms, but to replace it with a socialist system in which the economy serves the needs of working people rather than the profit interests of a financial oligarchy and the greed of corporate bosses.”

The candidacy of the PSG is also directed against the opportunist policy of the Left Party-PDS, which is directly responsible for the social deterioration of past years, as well as the WASG, which criticizes such policies only to support the Left Party on a national level.

The PSG manifesto states: “A serious socialist initiative in the Berlin state legislature that boldly opposed the employers’ organisations and lobbyists, that called things by their real name and sought to mobilise the population for fundamental social change would produce a very different outcome than that produced by the cowardly laments about unavoidable social cuts uttered by people who call themselves left-wing, but who in every case act as the cat’s paw of the right.”

The PSG calls upon all readers to support our campaign, to participate wherever possible at our upcoming election meetings and to take part in the discussion over a new political orientation with the candidates of the PSG.



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