

PSG takes legal action against Berlin district office over meeting ban

The Editorial Board
26 April 2007

The following press statement has been sent by the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party) to the editorial offices of all of Germany's national and regional newspapers, and radio and television stations.

On Monday, April 23, the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party, PSG) applied for an express court order against the Berlin district office of Tempelhof-Schöneberg. The aim of the court order is to ensure the reversal of a decision made by the district office to cancel a meeting planned by the PSG in May.

On April 20, the district office rejected an application by the PSG to use Schöneberg city hall for a public meeting on May 1.

The PSG regards this decision as an affront to the party's right to equal treatment and freedom of assembly. The PSG is opposed to the use of bureaucratic methods to suppress its meeting, which will be held under the title: "In Defence of Leon Trotsky: a Reply to the Post Soviet School of Falsification."

The main speaker at this meeting will be David North, who is chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, an organisation to which the PSG is affiliated. In his lecture, North will rebuff attacks currently being made by several historians on Leon Trotsky, the founder of the Trotskyist movement who was murdered by an agent of Stalin in 1940.

Seventy years after the Moscow trials and more than 15 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, North will deal with the background to attempts to slander the man, who, like no other, embodied the Marxist alternative to both Stalinism and capitalism.

The district office justified its refusal to permit the meeting with the blunt statement that on April 17 it had decided "not to open the Schöneberg city hall for

meetings on May 1 2007". According to the text, this decision "also unfortunately" affected the PSG, which could not be provided with rooms.

The facts are: The PSG is not "also" affected by this decision—it is the only party to have requested rooms on this day. It had made its application for a room on March 30. The officer responsible for such bookings had confirmed that the PSG was the only party to request a room on that day and that he had accordingly noted the application in the official register.

In addition, the city hall is open for meetings virtually throughout the entire year—including, as has been the case in previous years—on May 1. The responsible officer explained he would have never noted the requested meeting in the official register if the city hall would possibly be closed on that day.

It is also the case that the application by the PSG had been made weeks beforehand. At the time of its meeting, the district committee must have been well aware of the PSG request for a room on May 1.

No reasons relating to structural or technical problems were given, which can only lead to the conclusion that the decision by the district office was aimed at preventing the PSG meeting in the Schöneberg city hall.

The PSG regards the decision by the district office as an unconstitutional and illegal attack on the party's democratic right to equal treatment and freedom of assembly. Other parties such as the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Greens regularly use the premises of the city hall for public and internal meetings. The premises are also used by the Left Party, the Election Alternative (WASG), and many other political and cultural groups.

The PSG also notes that it has previously had problems with this district office with regard to

booking rooms. Last summer, the PSG applied and received permission to hold an election meeting in the city hall as part of its campaign in 2006 for the Berlin Senate election. The PSG was prevented, however, from holding its meeting. Without even informing the PSG, the district office had allocated the party a room adjoining a meeting being held at the same time by the extreme right-wing German National Party (NPD).

The PSG emphasises that its meeting on May 1 will take place under all circumstances.

Berlin, April 23, 2007



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