PSG May 1 meeting to be held in Schöneberg city hall

Berlin Court rules against district office

Ulrich Rippert
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The May 1 meeting of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG—the Socialist Equality Party of Germany) is to be held as planned in the Schöneberg city hall in Berlin. Last Friday, the Second Chamber of the Administration Court in Berlin issued an order that compels the district office of Tempelhof-Schöneberg to provide the PSG with a suitable room for the meeting.

The PSG's meeting will feature a lecture by David North, chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site* Editorial Board, entitled "In Defense of Leon Trotsky: a Reply to the Post Soviet School of Falsification." North will provide a critique of recently published biographies of Trotsky, which seek to crudely falsify the role of the most important Marxist opponent of Stalinism.

The meeting's flyer states, "Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, the political lie that was endlessly promoted in the 20th century—the equating of socialism with Stalinism—continues to be advanced. The reason for this is not hard to determine. It is becoming more and more apparent that capitalism is leading humanity into a dead end that is characterised by glaring social injustice, an increasingly irrational economic environment, and war."

The district office of Tempelhof-Schöneberg had attempted to prevent the meeting from going ahead. Two weeks after the PSG submitted its application for a room and received a verbal approval the district office held a hearing on April 17 and decided to close the city hall on May Day. The PSG mounted a campaign against this act of political censorship and sought a legal order from the Administrative Court in Berlin.

In its ruling the court used many of the arguments made by the PSG and its attorney Sebastian Scharmer from the legal firm of Hummer/Kaleck. It stated that the timing of the district office's decision gave rise "to the suspicion that the closure of the city hall on 1 May was only made to prevent the meeting of the applicant [the PSG]." It added that the state of Berlin was however "compelled to treat all parties the same ... The fact that the applicant is not a prohibited political party offers it the guarantee of the principle of equal opportunity and the right to equal treatment."

A public office was "authorized to close its premises on public holidays even when this deviates from previous practices, or to change the allocation of these premises due to important reasons," the court stated. "However, if this is done after already receiving an application, the suspicion is then raised whether the decision was made not based on general considerations but rather, in order to reject the application ... One is to assume that this is the case here."

The court confirmed this conclusion after reviewing the timing of the events. Based on the minutes of the district council's meeting on 17 April, the court viewed that "a clear and transparent ruling" to close the city hall had not been made. Instead, the closure was "always connected to the planned meeting of the applicant." Therefore, "the general impression" was given that the district office's "named administrative reason for the closure of the city hall" was "only advanced to prevent the planned issue of the room. Such a procedure is incompatible with the obligation to treat all political parties equally."

The decision of the court is a blow against the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens, which attempted to autocratically determine which political tendencies

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would be heard and to treat public premises like their own private property.

During a meeting of the district office just two days before the court's decision, one of the members of the three parties that had refused to open the city hall for the May Day meeting had received majority support from other councilors. The officer in charge of the district's facilities, Bernd Krömer from the CDU, as well as councilors from the SPD and Greens, then made derogatory comments about the PSG. Krömer abused the party as "some kind of sectarian group" and suggested, to the amusement of other district councilors, that the PSG meeting could be held "in a telephone booth" instead.

The working population of Berlin will treat Krömer's remarks with the contempt they deserve. He was speaking on behalf of the CDU—the party associated with the names of the Berlin politicians Eberhard Diepgen and Klaus-Rüdiger Landowsky, who combine hysterical anti-communism with unrestrained corruption, and whose names are inseparable from sleaze, cronyism and scandal. This is the party that now assumes the right to decide which parties are allowed inside Berlin's public buildings.

The SPD is just as contemptuous of democratic rights. As for the Greens, they have seamlessly integrated themselves into the corridors of power and aspire to a coalition with the CDU in the Berlin state senate in order to secure their share of posts and privilege. The current Berlin senate consists of a coalition of the SPD and the Left Party/Party of Democratic Socialism.

Millions of people, above all workers and their families, are confronted every day with the social consequences of the reactionary policies carried out in the interests of the rich, combined with harassment and bureaucratic arbitrariness on the part of the Berlin authorities and government departments. The hostility with which all the established parties reacted to the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit is because the PSG fights for a socialist program, which is based on the interests of the vast majority of the working population, against all the official parties, big business, and their hangers-on.

One can safely assume the theme of the PSG meeting provoked the ire of the established parties and motivated their effort to prevent it from occurring. West Berlin is located in the centre of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), where anti-communism has assumed particularly hysterical and poisonous forms, having long been fed by the crimes of Stalinism. As long as the rulers in East Berlin and Moscow promoted themselves as socialists and simultaneously suppressed every form of independent political movement in the working class, it was difficult for the working class in the West to develop a genuine socialist perspective.

Today, anti-communism both stands and falls on the thesis that the crimes of Stalinism were the unavoidable result of the October Revolution in 1917 and that there was no alternative to Stalinism. The political struggle that Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition led inside the Soviet Union and worldwide proves the opposite. It provides the historical proof that there was a socialist alternative to Stalinism. It explains the paradox of why Leon Trotsky was not only regarded by Moscow and East Berlin as state enemy number one, but also by the anti-communists in the West.

We invite all WSWS readers to attend the PSG meeting on May 1 and take the opportunity to discuss these questions with the lecturer David North.

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