For the unification of Europe on a socialist basis

Support the European election campaign of the Socialist Equality Party!

Of Socialist Equality Party (Germany)
20 February 2009

The Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG) *is participating with its own candidates in the European election on June 7. Based on the following statement, in the coming weeks the party will collect the signatures necessary for participation in the election.*

Should the future of Europe be left in the hands of the financial aristocracy and its representatives in the European Union bureaucracy and existing European governments, then disaster is inevitable. It is time for workers to intervene in developments and take the fate of society into their own hands.

This requires the building of a new party:

• a party that openly states that capitalism has failed and must be replaced by a socialist society with democratic control of the economy;

• a party that fights against nationalism and xenophobia and does not permit the ruling classes to plunge Europe into war and dictatorship—as was the case in 1914 and 1939;

• a party that unites workers and the unemployed, young people and pensioners, European workers and immigrants across all borders, and uncompromisingly defends their democratic and social rights;

• party that rejects the collaborationist politics of the trade unions and mobilises workers to defend jobs and prevent factory closures in opposition to the destructive frenzy of the capitalist owners and managers;

• a party that opposes all those—such as the German Left Party—who preach socialism in words and defend capitalism in practice.

The Socialist Equality Party (PSG) is taking part in the European election on June 7 in order to build such a party. As the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, we stand in the tradition of the Trotskyist movement, which has historically defended Marxism against social democracy and Stalinism. We cooperate closely with our affiliated parties in Europe and internationally. Our daily web site—the *World Socialist Web Site*—has won a significant and growing readership throughout the world and is widely recognised as the authentic voice of Marxism.

We fight for the establishment of a workers' government that gives priority to social needs above the profit interests of big business and the banks. Our perspective is to unify Europe on a socialist basis, for the United Socialist States of Europe.

The economic crisis and its causes

The international financial and economic crisis has already had a catastrophic impact on Europe. Industrial production has decreased dramatically, and the recession is developing at record speed. This crisis is not the result of some untamed forces of nature—a "tsunami" enveloping the world—as politicians of all parties would have us believe. Rather, it is the product of an economic system that encourages the rampant enrichment of a financial aristocracy who have plundered society with ruthless and criminal methods.

The same company CEOs and captains of industry who privatised all aspects of social life to further their own enrichment—all in the name of the "self-healing forces of the market"—are now demanding unlimited sums of state support and are shifting their gambling losses onto the backs of the population. Bankers are extorting the government, and politicians respond by putting billions in taxpayers' money at their disposal. Just one bank, Hypo Real Estate, has already received public subsidies and endorsements from the German government totalling €102 billion.

While astronomical sums are made available to the banks and major concerns, the working population is expected to pick up the tab in the form of unemployment, wage cuts, worsening working conditions and welfare cuts. Workers must resist this process. They do not bear the slightest responsibility for the crisis. They were not involved in the risky speculative transactions. They have not shovelled millions or billions into their own pockets. Quite the contrary: The dance around the golden calf in recent years was bound up with huge attacks on the standard of living of the working population.

When capitalism was reintroduced into East Germany and Eastern Europe 20 years ago, we were told that socialism had failed. In fact, what had failed was not socialism but Stalinism, the dictatorship of a privileged bureaucracy that treated the working population with arrogance and contempt. The introduction of capitalism was, socially speaking, a step backwards. A small elite consisting of the nouveaux riches and former Stalinists assumed a monopoly of control on social wealth and were able to enrich themselves fabulously. For the broad masses of the population, the reverse side of this process has led to widespread misery.

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Social inequality has also risen dramatically in Western Europe. In Germany, the Hartz reforms introduced by the former Social Democratic Party-Green Party coalition led to a huge redivision of the social wealth. The number of millionaires swelled while ever-more families were condemned to bitter poverty. Since the reintroduction of capitalism in 1990, the wealthiest 10 percent of German society has increased its income by more than 30 percent, while the bottom 10 percent earns 13 percent less.

The same politicians who justify drastic social cuts with allegedly empty treasuries are now handing out billions in public funds to the banks and transferring the burden of the crisis onto the population. The power of this parasitic elite can only be broken by a social rebellion involving a broad political mobilisation of the working class.

Protectionism and the threat of war

The European Union does not embody the unity of Europe. It merely eliminated the obstacles to intensified exploitation that stood in the way of the continent's most powerful banks and concerns. The EU has split the working class by playing off low-wage layers of the workforce against higher-wage earners while hermetically sealing off its borders against immigrants.

Now the ghosts of the past are re-emerging. Despite its lip service to European unity, every European government has responded to the crisis by seeking to strengthen its own economy at the expense of others. French President Nicolas Sarkozy has made his billion-euro support package for the domestic automobile industry dependent on a pledge by automakers to produce in France and use French parts. For its part, the German government is refusing to provide any help to poorer EU states. It hopes to utilise the crisis to tighten its dominance in Europe.

Such nationalist campaigns have the active support of the trade unions. The strike in the English oil refinery of Lindsey is one shocking example. Instead of promoting international solidarity between workers, the trade unions raised the reactionary slogan: "British jobs for British workers" and pitted British workers against their foreign colleagues. This reactionary policy has its roots in the social status of the trade union bureaucracy, which lives on the handouts it receives from the capitalist state, and ties the fates of workers to the "national interests" of the ruling class in each respective country.

Protectionism and economic war are the preliminary stages moving toward all-out war. For years, the Great Powers, first and foremost the US, have sought to compensate for their economic weakness by the use of military force. The European rivals of the US have responded to the latter's economic decline by making clear they are no longer prepared to subordinate their own economic and military ambitions to the US. The ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the massacre carried out by the Israeli army in Gaza, and the brutal onslaught by the Sri Lankan government against the island's Tamil minority demonstrate the ruthlessness with which the ruling class is prepared to defend its grip on power.

Whoever believes that there could be no repetition in Europe of the bloody events of the past century is making a big mistake. It would not be the first time that European governments have sought to suppress popular resistance by turning workers in one country against their fellow workers abroad in a process that leads inexorably towards war. Events in the Balkans are living proof of such a danger. The only answer to such a threat is an offensive for socialism on the part of the entire European working class.

The role of the Left Party

We reject the policy of the Left Party and similar formations in Europe. The Left Party of Oskar Lafontaine in Germany, Mélenchon's Left Party and Oliver Besancenot's New Anti-Capitalist Party in France, Communist Refoundation in Italy, and SYRIZA in Greece were created to fill the gaps left by the decline of Europe's social-democratic and Stalinist parties. These organisations offer their services as a force to maintain the bourgeois order and see their main task in preventing any revolutionary development by workers.

The ruling elite is well aware that the economic and social crisis will lead to social conflicts, which will far exceed the youth protests in Greece at the end of last year. The ruling class is preparing for such an eventuality in two ways: by restricting democratic rights, strengthening the apparatuses of state and police repression and stirring up nationalist and racist tendencies. At the same time, they rely on the "left" parties to head off mass mobilisations and lead them into a dead end. The history of Europe has been dominated by such defeats for the working class at the hands of such opportunist parties—beginning with the support for the First World War by the SPD.

The Socialist Equality Party appeals to all workers, unemployed persons and young people: Take up the authentic perspective of revolutionary socialism! Support the election campaign of the PSG! Make the participation of the PSG in the election possible with your signature! Contact us to actively support the PSG campaign! Spread this appeal on the Internet! Develop discussion groups of the WSWS!

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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