

Germany: Campaign to place the PSG on the ballot wins wide support

Our correspondents
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For the past four weeks members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG) have been collecting the signatures necessary for the party's participation in the European elections to be held in June.

Towards the end of this week the PSG will submit a total of 4,200 valid signatures to the federal election agency. Every signature must be written on a separate official form and include extensive personal data, such as address and date of birth. These signatures are then checked by the appropriate registration office.

Despite these bureaucratic obstacles the PSG has been able to win broad support. The party has campaigned for signatures at employment agencies, job centres, shopping centres and other public places and conducted thousands of discussions over the necessity for a new socialist party. PSG members and supporters have stressed that the current crisis represents a crisis of the entire capitalist system, which has to be replaced by a socialist society involving the full democratic control of the economy.

The election manifesto drawn up by the PSG, which has been distributed in the last few weeks in thousands of copies, states: "We are fighting to establish a workers' government that prioritizes the needs of society above the interests of profit and big business and the unity of Europe on a socialist basis, for the United Socialist States of Europe."

Berlin Friedrichshain

In the course of the campaign the PSG organised an intervention in the Berlin suburb of Friedrichshain. PSG posters proclaimed, "Unite against the Europe of big business," and the party's book stall table featured the principal works of Leon Trotsky and other leading Marxist authors. The campaign met with considerable interest. Time and time again discussions revolved around the rapid growth of social inequality, with many people expressing their anger at the way in which the government has so blatantly acted in the interests of the banks and the super rich.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with a number of passers-by.

In the opinion of the 25-year-old cultural studies student Eva Maria, every aspect of social life is determined by the interests of the big capital. In particular, the €500 billion rescue package for German banks agreed by the federal government was aimed at defending the capitalist system and the privileges of the top layer of society.

According to Eva Maria: "The interests of the capitalists are invariably put above those of the population. The fact is that politics is so closely linked with big business and its lobby groups that it comes as no surprise that the government works in their interests."

Although the population does not bear any responsibility for the crisis, they are being forced to carry the burden of the economic collapse, Eva Maria said. "We live today in a class society," she declared. "Capitalism developed historically from the feudalism, which in turn emerged from slave society. Today we have another form of suppression, but for me capitalism means nothing less than naked exploitation."

When WSWS members stressed the necessity of building a new workers' party and described the work of the PSG, Eva agreed. She said that such a party is "urgently necessary" today. "I do not feel that any of the established parties represent my interests." The Left Party, which has its roots in Stalinism, is no alternative. "The Left Party is treading the same path as the Greens. In the 1970s Green Party leader Joschka Fischer threw stones and played the rebel, until he ended up becoming the minister of foreign affairs. The Left Party is no different," she said.

Kai Exner worked for a temporary job agency, which found him work with another company. He received an annual contract and worked in the company warehouse as a forklift truck driver. Due to the financial crisis he is to be made redundant at the beginning of next month, together with all other subcontracted workers at the company. Reporters for the WSWS met him on his way to the labour exchange.

The company Kai worked for manufactured machines for road construction. One such machine cost a half million euros or more. Kai reported, "In the past it was only possible for building firms to finance such machines with credit." The financial crisis has hit the building industry with full force. "Hundreds of machines now stand idle on a waste ground and we continue to lose our jobs," he said.

Kai added: "I think the crisis is just starting to bite. My contract ran out after one year and was not extended. That is because the temporary job agencies are particularly hard hit by the crisis and nobody is doing anything. The billions for the banks must be put to better use." The aim should be to ensure that not a single worker is dismissed due to the crisis, he said. "This should be the task of the government and they should make available the money necessary."

Daniel Winkler, 35, is a social worker. He said, "The main priority of the political elite is to guarantee the existence of the old system. I think that situation can only be changed by the expropriation of the banks and large-scale companies. It cannot be permitted that top managers continue to feather their nests." No society can tolerate for long such obscene level of unfairness, Daniel said.

He added. "We are almost back to the times of the

Weimar Republic when a small layer of the super rich brought society to the brink of ruin with their insatiable greed for wealth."

The same bank managers, who were responsible for the disaster, are now lining up for their millions in bonuses. At the same time the population is being "crushed to the bone," Daniel said. It is only a matter of time before people rise up.

The PSG campaign also won broad support at the employment agency and job centre in the Berlin suburb of Lichtenberg, where hundreds of young and older unemployed persons, some of whom had just lost their jobs, readily gave their signature to support the party.

In the unemployment line were a number of workers from a nearby foundry, which had dismissed its entire workforce of 50 one day earlier. Andre, 40, and Alex, 53, explained to the WSWS. "We had less and less orders since the crisis began, because we carry out mechanical engineering. In September last year all of the subcontracted workers were sacked and since then we have been repeatedly forced onto short-time working.

"Then we were told the factory could keep going. Finally, last Friday we all received our notice to quit. This is the end of a company that has existed for nearly a century and used to employ thousands in the days of former East Germany. We have not heard a peep from the trade union or the works. There is nobody ready to defend the ordinary worker."



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