

Vote for the SEP (Germany) in the European elections

Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit)
4 June 2009

The Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG) is the only party putting forward an international socialist program for the European elections taking place this Sunday. The distribution and discussion of such a program, as part of the process of building parties all over the world based on such a perspective, is the most important preparation for the class struggles that will inevitably develop as the current economic crisis deepens.

The election is taking place in the midst of the deepest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s and in an extremely tense social situation. The institutions of the European Union and the various European governments are trying however, to hide the real extent of the crisis.

The facts are clear. The gross domestic product in Europe sank in the first quarter of this year by 4.4 percent compared to one year previously and the German economy, which is often described as the motor of the European Union, plunged by 6.9 percent. Analysts are now predicting that the German economy could shrink by up to 20 percent by the end of the year—wiping out the 20 years of growth since the reunification of Germany in 1990.

The effects on the job market are already catastrophic. According to the Statistical Office of the European Community (Eurostat), the number of unemployed in the member countries of the European Union rose to over 20 million in March. This is an increase of 4 million compared to the previous year. Many millions of European citizens have been plunged into unemployment and poverty, while a tiny minority of shareholders, stock market speculators and managers have been able to acquire huge fortunes.

With slumping economies and growing unemployment, social welfare systems across the

continent are threatened with collapse. A deficit of €50 billion is expected in Germany due to shortfalls in unemployment and health insurance contributions this year alone.

All of the established political parties in Germany are playing down the extent of the crisis and using measures such as auto-sales premiums and the widespread introduction of short-time working to ward off the worst effects of the crisis until the federal election due in September. Under no circumstances is there to be any real debate over the crisis of capitalism.

At the same time, the government is preparing to shift the entire burden of the crisis onto the backs of the population. Having promised the German finance community more than a trillion euros as part of its banking rescue packages and “bad bank” policy, a so-called brake on indebtedness is now being introduced into the German constitution to force state governments and municipalities to implement massive cuts in their respective social welfare systems.

The election campaign resembles a political conspiracy on the part of all the parties in the German parliament, aimed at deceiving the population over the true intentions of the government. The goal is to ensure relative social calm up until the federal election in the autumn. After the election the government in power—irrespective of its political composition—will then undertake a series of massive social and political attacks.

This political deception is particularly evident in the case of the auto manufacturer Opel. All of the political parties, with the support of the trade unions and a majority of the media, celebrate the separation of GM Europe from General Motors in the US as the “rescue” of Opel. In fact, the only binding decision taken last weekend concerns the wiping out of 8,500 jobs in the

European GM works, with 2,600 jobs to be lost in Germany. All other decisions are merely noncommittal declarations, or a so-called “memorandums of understanding.” Legally binding contracts will only be finalized in September.

Although the trade unions are doing everything in their power to prevent any serious workplace resistance, the ruling elite is well aware that mass unemployment and the wiping out of social security benefits will lead to violent social conflicts. It is preparing a double-handed response: foremost by attacking democratic rights through the expansion of state surveillance and the arming up of the state apparatus; and secondly, by promoting organizations such as the Left Party, which utilize left-wing rhetoric but in practice carry out right-wing policies.

Left Party leaders Oskar Lafontaine and Gregor Gysi, see their task as diverting growing social opposition to the crisis into harmless channels. Their aim is to stabilize capitalism, not abolish it. The solidarity exhibited by this party for capitalism has led it to conduct an unwavering shift to the right—exemplified in the party’s full support for the government’s billion-euro “rescue package” for the banks.

The PSG puts forward a completely different alternative in the face of this crisis: It proposes a socialist transformation of society, which puts human needs above the profit interests of a tiny social minority. It calls for an unconditional basic income of €1,500 for all, the expropriation of the major banks and companies and the democratic control of the economy and big business concerns.

In order to establish such aims a political break with the Social Democratic Party, Left Party and the trade unions is necessary. The PSG fights for the political independence of the working class and supports demonstrations, strikes and the building of independent factory committees. Workers must free themselves from the national stranglehold of the trade unions and develop an alternative based on international cooperation and solidarity.

In the preparation for coming confrontations with employers and the government, the building of the Socialist Equality Party assumes crucial importance. As the German section of the Fourth International, the PSG has carried out a decades-long struggle for socialist principles against Stalinism and the forces of social

democracy.

A vote for the Socialist Equality Party, is a first step in the active political struggle for a new society based on the values of solidarity and humanity, as part of the unification of Europe on a socialist basis.



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