

European elections

Germany: The significance of the Socialist Equality Party campaign

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12 June 2009

The Socialist Equality Party in Germany (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG) was the only party participating in the European elections to make clear the real extent of the capitalist crisis and to propose a socialist transformation of society.

The election manifesto of the PSG states: “Just as in the first half of the last century, the crisis confronts mankind with a stark alternative: socialism or barbarism. Not a single social or political problem can be resolved without breaking the domination of finance capital. The crisis cannot be overcome by patching up capitalism; it requires a social transformation and the building of a socialist society.”

Tens of thousands of PSG election manifestos were distributed in cities across Germany. Countless discussions were held with workers and students at universities, at labor exchanges and at public election meetings organized by the PSG in Berlin, Bochum, Leipzig, Frankfurt, Hamburg and, for the first time, in Munich.

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party, I would like first of all to warmly thank all those who supported our election campaign in any way, and who voted for the PSG in the election.

The PSG received 9,673 votes. While this total is significantly less than the vote won by the party in the European election five years ago, it would be a mistake to assess the significance of the elections from the narrow viewpoint of how many votes were won.

The PSG took part in the last European election in 2004 and won 25,800 votes at a time when there was a strong protest movement against the Hartz IV laws and the anti-welfare policies of the government led by

Gerhard Schröder. Rallies and demonstrations against the SPD-Green coalition government took place in many cities. Today, five years later, any hopes on the part of the working population that they could defend their interests within the framework of the parliamentary system have been dashed.

In addition, it is clear that the real role and identity of the European parliament has been grasped by broad layers of the electorate—i.e., that it is nothing less than a pseudo-democratic cover for the institutions of the European Union based in Brussels, which openly function in the interests of the European great powers and powerful business federations. In some federal states, such as Brandenburg, less than 30 percent of the electorate turned out to vote, making clear their opposition to the European Union.

Large sections of the population feel that they have been deserted by all of the established parties, leading to a situation where new political groupings have emerged that concentrate on individual issues. Of the 31 parties and political groupings that took part in Germany in the European elections, a dozen were standing candidates for the first time, including two parties for pensioners, a party for families and some religious groups.

Most of these groupings were of a right-wing character, but not all. One with a rather more leftist orientation is the so-called Pirate Party, which calls for democratic rights on the Internet, and opposes censorship and bans. On its first showing, the party won 0.9 percent of the vote in Germany. In Sweden, its country of origin, it won 7 percent at its first attempt to enter parliament.

It should also be noted that the election campaign of

the PSG was subjected to a systematic boycott by the media. Not a single daily paper or television station reported on the PSG campaign. Interviews with candidates of the PSG were reduced to a minimum. While the most obscure political groups were awarded airtime and Sahra Wagenknecht, the spokesperson of the Communist Platform in the Left Party, was able to appear in on string of talk shows, the PSG campaign was completely ignored by the media. Even legally prescribed TV and radio spots of the PSG were invariably transmitted at unfavourable viewing times.

It is clear that the programme of the PSG is so current and explosive that it is has to be concealed from the public under all circumstances.

Wherever the PSG was able to find an audience, it met with agreement and support. Dozens of new members were won, and the basis was established for new branches in three important cities. The party headquarters also received more positive feedback and more contacts were made than in any previous election campaign.

More important than the relatively small number of votes won by the party is the fact that, together with these positive experiences, the election result fully confirmed the political analysis of the PSG.

The decline of social democracy is not a temporary event, but a historical turning point. Until now, the ruling class has relied on social-democratic parties and trade unions to suppress social struggles. The unrelenting collapse of this social reformist bureaucracy introduces a new stage of violent social conflicts and open class struggles.

It is very significant that just a few hours after polling stations closed, the German government made the decision to drive Arcandor, one of the country's largest department store chains, into bankruptcy, threatening 56,000 jobs. In addition, nothing has been decided at Opel. There are a number of indications that Economics Minister zu Guttenberg (CSU), together with functionaries of business associations, is intent on pushing the auto company into insolvency.

In view of the dramatic loss in votes for the SPD and the shift by a section of conservatives to the free-market Free Democratic Party, such neo-liberal forces feel strengthened and are going on the offensive.

The international socialist programme put forward by the PSG in the election campaign will undoubtedly

assume great significance in the coming social conflicts. This was already evident during the election campaign and was demonstrated by the seriousness with which the election programme was studied and discussed.

On this basis, we make an urgent call to our supporters and the nearly 10,000 persons who voted for us. It is necessary to become politically active! There are a many ways in which one can contribute to building the PSG. Federal elections take place within a few months, and the participation of the PSG has already been secured. Our political work, however, is not restricted to election campaigns. We are determined to oppose with all our energy the social attacks confronting workers in the form of mass redundancies, wage and welfare cuts.

Our struggle against the right-wing policies of the SPD and the Left Party, and the divisive tactics of the trade unions, is directly bound up with the building of action committees to actively defend jobs and wages and enable workers to play an independent political role in the crisis.

To this end, we need the active support and cooperation of all those who expressed their confidence in us with their vote last Sunday. Register here as a supporter of the PSG.



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