

Germany: SEP holds election campaign meetings in four cities

Our correspondents
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Last weekend, the Socialist Equality Party in Germany (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG) held meetings in Leipzig, Bochum, Bielefeld and Hamburg as part of its campaign for the federal elections taking place this Sunday. The previous week, PSG supporters met in Munich and Frankfurt to discuss current political developments. The campaign will culminate on Saturday, September 26, with a central election meeting in Berlin, to which transport from around the country has been organized.

The meetings have been prepared by an intensive campaign, in the course of which thousands of election flyers have been distributed, hundreds of posters put up and dozens of information stands organized, provoking numerous discussions with students, apprentices and workers.

Each of the meetings was introduced by one of the party's candidates or a PSG executive committee member. In Bochum, as expected, the developments at Opel took central place in the discussion. The auto parts supplier Magna, as well as its two Russian partners, the state Sberbank and vehicle manufacturer GAZ, plan to cut more than 2,000 of the remaining 5,200 jobs in Bochum. Altogether some 10,500 jobs are to be destroyed across Europe, with 4,500 facing the axe in Germany.

Opel's Bochum Plant II, with its transmission and axle manufacturing, is to be closed completely. In his speech to the Bochum meeting, Dietmar Gaisenkersting, PSG candidate in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), said Magna's plans meant the gradual closure of Opel's operations in Bochum.

It is becoming ever clearer that Opel workers not only confront an aggressive management in GM headquarters in Detroit. Rather, they are being attacked in a pincer movement by the Detroit management, on

the one hand, and by the works councils and IG Metall union on the other, and are being forced to accept unparalleled cuts in jobs, wages and benefits.

Gaisenkersting also dealt with the international ramifications of the Opel takeover. With its support for the Magna consortium, the German government is trying to pursue its own geo-strategic and related energy policy interests. It is consciously strengthening the Berlin-Moscow axis against the US. "Opel workers cannot allow themselves to be exploited by the works councils for these imperialist aims," Gaisenkersting said. PSG chair Ulrich Rippert then pointed to the growing international tensions as a result of the war in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan was also a central question discussed in Leipzig. PSG executive committee member Peter Schwarz cited several statistics to show how the super-rich were exploiting the crisis to further enrich themselves, and the scale of the attacks on the rights of working people that would follow the elections. The discussion then turned to the brutal massacre perpetrated by the German armed forces in Kunduz. At least 125 people were killed in this attack ordered by the military commander of the German Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), Colonel Georg Klein, which wiped out many civilians in neighbouring villages.

Detailing the circumstances of the capture of two lorries and their later bombardment, Schwarz showed how the fatal order given by Klein could not have been a "panic reaction," but must have been backed up from higher up the chain of command. "There are influential political and military circles that want to expand this war," Schwarz said. All the official parties in Berlin have reacted to the massacre by justifying the war. Even the Left Party has dropped its demand for

immediate withdrawal and now supports Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's "exit strategy."

An audience member from Afghanistan supported the analysis advanced by Schwarz. He explained that for a long time now it is not just the Taliban that have been offering resistance in the country. "The Taliban were hated in Afghanistan," he said. "However, they now have more support than ever." The brutal NATO-led war has unleashed massive resistance in the population. He also reported that the number of civilians killed in the Kunduz massacre has had to be corrected upwards nearly every day.

Other participants at the meetings attributed the brutal nature of the war to its colonial character. Like all the other parties, the Left Party conceals this and has now clearly taken the side of the occupying forces.

In Bielefeld, Elisabeth Zimmermann, PSG candidate in North Rhine-Westphalia, spoke alongside Dietmar Gaisenkersting about the Afghanistan war as well as about the differences between the PSG and the Left Party.

A professor from Bielefeld agreed with the PSG's evaluation of the Left Party. "The Left Party places itself at the head of the protests, in order to be able to blunt them," he said in the course of the discussion. He knew of such experiences from organizations in the student movement.

An intensive discussion developed on the questions of internationalism and bourgeois national liberation movements after an audience member asked about the real meaning of the internationalism of the PSG in contrast to the frequently proclaimed "international solidarity."

Gaisenkersting explained that the PSG was the German section of the Fourth International. This meant not only that it was organizationally distinct from all other organizations that call themselves socialist, but that the party analyzed all political questions from an international point of view. There is not a single problem that can be resolved within the national framework, Gaisenkersting explained.

The PSG rejects the creation of new "mini states" in Sri Lanka, Spain or Palestine, as is the goal of various national liberation movements. Zimmermann added that this perspective had proved to be a dead end. The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union meant a social disaster for working people in these countries,

while a small layer of bureaucrats and gangsters have been able to enrich themselves to a fantastic degree.

Discussions were continued after the meetings in neighbouring cafes. Many left their email address or telephone number to stay in contact with the PSG or arrange transport to Berlin for Saturday's meeting.



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