

Pro-Israeli provocateurs unsuccessfully try to disrupt SEP (Germany) meeting in defence of Günter Grass

Our correspondents
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On Friday, a group of right-wing, pro-Israeli provocateurs unsuccessfully tried to prevent a meeting of the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) and the Socialist Equality Party (PSG) in defence of the writer Günter Grass.

The meeting in Frankfurt-Bockenheim was titled “Stop the war mongers! Defend Gunter Grass,” and addressed the preparations for war being made by the United States and Israel against Iran—preparations which are also supported by the German government.

The invitation to the meeting stated: “The main claims made by Günter Grass in his poem, ‘What must be said’ are entirely justified and correct: The Israeli government is preparing an aggressive war against Iran which could potentially lead to a third world war.”

About half an hour before the meeting, a group of about 30 to 40 people proceeded from a nearby park to the venue, the Bockenheimer hall. They carried Israeli and American flags and an oversized plastic mallet embellished with a Star of David. They made considerable noise and tore down a poster advertising the meeting.

PSG stewards decided not to let the troublemakers into the meeting, recognising that they were intent on causing disruption. The protesters then proceeded to block the stairs, declared they would prevent the meeting from taking place and abused those seeking to attend.

An Iranian woman who came to the event was surrounded and threatened. A steward from the PSG, who rushed to help the woman, had his camera stolen. The thugs also stole the bag of a man who managed to break through the cordon.

The thugs only left the stairs after the caretaker called the police. They then positioned themselves on the opposite side of the road, unfurled Israeli and American flags and chanted “Long Live Israel.”

The meeting was a great success despite the disruption. Almost 70 people refused to be intimidated by the bullying and threats, and attended the meeting. They came from many walks of life and included airport staff, engineers, teachers, students and professors. Several were from Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Palestine, Israel and Iran.

In his report to the meeting, Wolfgang Weber, a member of the leadership of the Socialist Equality Party, dealt with the current military deployment by the US and Israel against Iran and raised the political and historical background of the current war threat.

He quoted a statement made by US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta, who told the Washington Post in January it was “highly likely that Israel will strike against Iran in April, May or June.” Although negotiations are currently taking place in Istanbul between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak has publicly defended the option of an illegal military strike against Iran.

“In this situation,” Weber said, “Grass used a poem to warn of the danger of an Israeli attack on Iran. He declared that war confronted the Middle East, and that Germany was supplying weapons of war (such as submarines). What is wrong with these statements?”

Weber dealt with the historical background to the war preparations against Iran and revealed the real driving forces: first and foremost, the control of oil resources. In 1953, the US had toppled the nationalist Mossadeq regime in Iran after it had nationalized the country’s oil industry, and used Shah Reza Pahlavi as its puppet. The Iranian revolution of 1978-79 subsequently put an end to direct US control over the region. Since then US imperialism has repeatedly tried to regain its influence.

Ultimately, the issue for the United States was not just the exploitation of oil resources in its own interests, but also wresting control of the energy supplies away from its competitors. The main purchasers of Iranian oil are currently

China followed by Japan, India, Pakistan and other countries.

Weber also recalled that the former US security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had pointed out the strategic importance of the region for the preservation of the superpower status of the United States in his book *The Grand Chessboard* (1998).

Weber described the state of Israel “as a tragic trap for all those who, in the wake of the Holocaust, sought a refuge from anti-Semitism and the danger of annihilation.” Since its inception and the expulsion of the Palestinians, the Israeli government has been on a permanent war footing. Formerly, many Jews regarded socialism as the answer to persecution. It was only after the defeat inflicted by Stalinism on the German labour movement, and the subsequent crimes of the Nazi regime, that the Zionists were able to gain the upper hand with their own national solution.

Weber pointed out that Israel was far removed from being a homogenous society. “The country is torn by deep class divisions. Last summer witnessed the biggest social protests in Israel’s history. Today, polls show that eighty percent of Israelis oppose a first strike against Iran,” Weber continued. “If one concurred with the definition that anyone who criticises Israel’s war preparations is necessarily anti-Semitic, then eighty percent of the Israeli population must be anti-Semites.”

Weber then dealt at some length with German militarism, which has once again become increasingly active all over the world since reunification—from participation in the wars in the Balkans and Afghanistan to passive support of the Iraq war, and now active involvement in the preparations for the attacks on Syria and Iran.

“The struggle against war must be based on the mobilisation of the international working class against the warmongers in Washington, Berlin and Tel Aviv,” Weber concluded. “Our slogan is: the United Socialist States of the Middle East! And the United Socialist States of Europe! “

The report was followed by a lively discussion. A number of those present praised Weber’s remarks. Several participants expressed their concern over the threat of war, and also the vicious public attacks launched against Grass. Others wanted to know more about the character and perspective of the PSG and the Fourth International.

At the end of the meeting several visitors personally thanked the speaker and shook his hand. A Kurdish participant praised the “truly profound contribution.” An older worker from Syria, who had lived and worked in Germany for 40 years, explicitly thanked the PSG for refuting the official propaganda about Syria, and asked how he could vote for the PSG. Many of those attending gave their addresses in order to remain in contact with the PSG.

The attempt to disrupt the meeting in Frankfurt must be seen in the context of efforts to intimidate and silence any opposition to the preparations for war in the Middle East.

Since publishing his poem “What must be said,” the 84-year-old Nobel laureate Günter Grass has been subject to a wave of slander recalling the darkest days of German history. Grass, who has dedicated his literary work to confronting the country’s Nazi past, has been reviled in leading media outlets as an anti-Semite and supporter of Hitler.

The ruling elite in politics and the media are evidently intent on ensuring that there is no discussion on the preparations for new war crimes in the Middle East, in which they—as Grass points out in his poem—are profoundly implicated.

The provocateurs who unsuccessfully tried to disrupt the meeting in Frankfurt have sought to hide their identity. A leaflet they distributed failed to name either author or any individual responsible for the text. An article that reported approvingly on the provocation and appeared almost simultaneously on the Indymedia Internet platform claimed the author was the “people in Frankfurt.”

The form and content of the provocation, however, make clear that the provocateurs were, if not organisationally, then at least politically, closely connected to the Israeli, American and German governments and adhere to the extreme right wing. The physical disruption of antiwar meetings was a favorite tactic of the Nazis during the Weimar Republic.

An article by Axel Feuerherdt in the *Jungle World* magazine, which is reproduced on their flyer, also indicates that the pro-Israeli thugs are linked to the milieu of the so-called “Anti-Germans”. This is a political movement that denounces even the slightest criticism of Israeli government policy as anti-Semitic.

The statement on the Indymedia platform calls for further provocations to be launched against the PSG meetings in defence of Günter Grass in Berlin and Leipzig on 23 and 24 April. The PSG has requested that Indymedia immediately remove from its network this blatant attack on the freedom of expression, but has so far received no response.

We call on all readers of the WSWs to oppose this attack and to attend our forthcoming meetings in Berlin and Leipzig.



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