

Resolution of the National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (Germany)

The defence of Günter Grass and the struggle against German militarism

16 August 2012

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party of Germany—PSG) held its National Congress in Berlin on June 22-24, 2012. In addition to delegates from Germany, representatives and co-thinkers of the International Committee of the Fourth International from other European countries, the United States, Australia and Sri Lanka attended the congress. The discussion focused on the crisis of the European Union and the political tasks arising from it. This was the subject of the main resolution, adopted unanimously by the congress, which the WSWS posted on August 14. The second resolution was posted on August 15. Today we are posting the third resolution. The remaining resolution will be posted August 17.

1. The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) defends Günter Grass and strongly condemns the attacks against him. In his political poem “What Must Be Said” this internationally renowned writer told the truth about Israeli-American and German plans for war. The poem accuses the Israeli government of preparing war against Iran and endangering “an already fragile world peace.” Grass writes that the Israeli government claims the “right to a first strike” against a country where “not a single atom bomb has yet been proven to exist”. Israel, on the other hand, has “a growing nuclear potential” that is “beyond supervision or verification”. Grass criticizes the German government, which “has delivered yet another submarine to Israel... whose specialty consists in its ability to direct nuclear warheads”, while cynically declaring this to be an act of compensation for past German crimes.

2. This correct and principled opposition to war by the Nobel laureate unleashed an unprecedented smear campaign in the media and in political circles. No lie was too heinous to be used against Grass. Journalists such as Josef Joffe, a supporter of the Iraq war and co-editor of *Die Zeit*, and Henryk M. Broder, notorious for his racist attacks on Muslims, defamed Grass as an anti-Semite, referring to his brief membership in the Waffen SS. Others, like Beate Klarsfeld, the presidential candidate of the Left Party, and Malte Lehming, the opinion page editor of *Der Tagesspiegel*, went so far as to compare Grass to Hitler. Mathias Döpfner, CEO of Axel Springer AG, headlined his own attack on the writer “The Core of the Onion is Brown”, referring to one of the last works written by Grass, in which he reveals his SS membership as a

minor.

3. The hysterical campaign by the ruling class against Günter Grass expresses a fundamental shift in German foreign policy. After decades of abstinence, German imperialism is increasingly striving to reassert its interests based on the use of military power. The German abstention in the UN Security Council on the imperialist campaign against Libya was sharply criticized by influential circles of the ruling elite and is now regarded as a serious foreign policy error. The German bourgeoisie is no longer willing to stand on the sidelines when it comes to the allocation of resources and strategic spheres of influence amongst the great powers. It is already deeply involved in the war preparations against Syria and Iran.

4. With the intensification of the crisis of capitalism and the increasing use of the military as an instrument of foreign policy following the collapse of the Soviet Union, all of the unresolved historical contradictions confronting Germany are reemerging once again. After two world wars, the German bourgeoisie was forced to exercise military restraint and secure its foreign policy interests in a close partnership with the United States. However, the eruption of US militarism, which is attempting to compensate for its economic decline at the expense of its European and Asian competitors, is increasingly destabilising the transatlantic alliance. Germany remains militarily dependent on the United States, but as an export nation with a huge appetite for raw materials, it has established close economic relations with Russia and China. Its strategic location between East and West once again poses a dilemma to German foreign policy. While Germany gave its unconditional support to the US-led wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan, it voted alongside Russia and China in the Security Council during the war preparations against Iraq and Libya. For a long time Germany pursued the goal of a common European foreign and security policy to secure its interests against its international rivals. The intensification of the euro crisis and the emergence of inter-imperialist conflicts in Europe itself, however, have left this perspective in ruins. The German bourgeoisie responds to these developments with an aggressive attempt to revive German militarism in order to advance its strategic and economic interests. Germany occupies third place behind the US and Russia when it comes to weapons exports. Despite tactical

differences in foreign policy, all of the wings of the German ruling class are united in their support for intensified militarism.

5. Whoever criticises these plans is to be silenced. This is the significance of the attacks launched against Günter Grass. Grass was singled out because he speaks on behalf of the vast majority of the German population, which strongly rejects militarism and war. As in the past, the growth of militarism goes hand in hand with the suppression of democratic rights. Meetings in defence of Grass organised by the PSG in several cities have been attacked by violent disrupters from the milieu of the Anti-Germans, who have close ties to the state and are in favour of a war of aggression against Iran. The vehemence of the attacks against Grass makes clear that the ruling class in Germany is once again preparing crimes of historic proportions. It is the outrageous allegations made by journalists and politicians against Grass that recall most graphically the actions of the Nazis. One of their first acts after taking power was to burn the books of writers who opposed their war plans, including the works of Kurt Tucholsky, Carl von Ossietzky, Erich Maria Remarque and Heinrich Mann. The violent suppression of opponents of war and the destruction of the workers' parties—the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party (SPD)—paved the way for the Second World War.

6. The fact that politicians from all the main parties, including the SPD, the Greens, the Left Party and the Pirate Party, participated in the attacks on Grass makes clear that there is no basis for opposition against militarism and war within ruling circles. Rather, it is the former pacifist, liberal and “left” elements around the Greens, the Social Democrats, the trade unions and the middle-class “left” who most intensely call for a resurgence of German militarism and seek to provide an ideological justification. Germany must finally “forgive itself” and once again assume “leadership”, they demand, and then cynically declare that it is above all the history of Germany that necessitates its participation in wars for “freedom” and “human rights”. It was the Greens, the party of petty-bourgeois pacifism, that justified German military intervention in Kosovo with the argument that it was necessary to prevent a new Holocaust in the Balkans. Joschka Fischer, who as Green foreign minister in 1999 played the key role in the Kosovo war, has since described the German abstention in the Libyan war as the “biggest foreign policy debacle since the founding of the Federal Republic.”

7. The justification of Germany's new war policy with references to Auschwitz and the “defence of Israel's right to exist” is a shameful attempt by the German bourgeoisie to utilise their colossal crimes of the past to justify future atrocities. The cynical accusations of anti-Semitism levied against opponents of war such as Grass are aimed at distracting attention from the real strategic and economic interests of the German bourgeoisie. The PSG decisively rejects these accusations of anti-Semitism. The majority of the Israeli working class is just as opposed to the war plans of their own bourgeoisie as workers in Germany. The state of Israel has not fulfilled the Jewish hopes of security and peace, but has proven to be a deadly trap. From its foundation, it was based on the forceful repression of the Palestinian people and served as a bridgehead for the US in the Middle East. The future of Jewish workers can be safeguarded only through a common struggle with

the Arab and international working class for the United Socialist States of the Middle East.

8. “General enthusiasm over the prospects of imperialism, furious defense of it and painting it in the brightest colours—such are the signs of the times”, Lenin wrote in his work *Imperialism*, which examines the causes of the First World War. The dominance of finance capital over all sectors of society and the intensification of conflicts between the great powers over the division of the world “cause the propertied classes to go over entirely to the side of imperialism”, Lenin explained. These lines are more relevant today than ever. The “left” and pacifist bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers who were active in the peace movement in the 1980s have now gone over to the camp of imperialism. The intensification of the capitalist crisis and the growth of social inequality have stripped away the basis for their national reformist perspective in the struggle against war and transformed them into the most militant defenders of German militarism.

9. The only social force capable of stopping the rise of German militarism and the threat of a third world war is the international working class. It represents the great majority of the world's population, and its social interests are irreconcilably opposed to imperialism. The working class is the only class that has no interest in the defence of the profit system, the private ownership of the means of production, and the division of the world into rival nation-states. It can no longer allow a tiny, supremely wealthy financial elite to monopolise social wealth and condemn the rest of the world to war and exploitation. This congress emphasizes that the struggle against militarism and war is inextricably linked to the mobilization of the working class on the basis of an international socialist program. The working class can put an end to the danger of militarism and war only through the overthrow of the capitalist system and the struggle for a world socialist society based on social equality and genuine democracy.



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