

Germany: Participation of Socialist Equality Party (PSG) confirmed in the parliamentary election

Our reporters
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At its meeting yesterday the Federal Election Commission agreed to the participation of the Socialist Equality Party (PSG) in the German parliamentary election this September. At the same meeting, the commission rejected the applications by a number of other political groups to take part in the election.

In the weeks prior to yesterday's committee meeting the PSG was involved in a drawn-out confrontation with the Federal Election Office. Already at the end of May the PSG had made a written application to take part in the ballot and sent copies of its program: "The Historical Foundations of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit," plus its statement for the current federal election.

The documents presented by the PSG included protocols of the constitution of the party leadership, party conventions and an extensive documentation dealing with the participation of the PSG in public political life.

A few days after receiving the material the Federal Election Officer declared that the documents provided fulfilled the legal requirements for participation, but that he had considerable doubts as to whether the PSG had fulfilled the substantive requirements for ballot status. He asked for additional proof of the party's structure, membership, public activities and participation in the political process.

The PSG once again provided an extensive presentation of its political work. Since 1989 the PSG has participated in 14 elections, including the 2009 parliamentary elections, the 2009 European election and the election for the Berlin Senate in 2011. It has collected several tens of thousands of support signatures all of which were authenticated by registry

offices. The party organized hundreds of information tables and presented its election program in many radio and television spots. For the Berlin election campaign two years ago the PSG put up 6,000 election posters and distributed hundreds of thousands of handbills.

The PSG provides the German editorial board for the *World Socialist Web Site*, and last year published over 1,000 in-depth articles on major political, cultural, and scientific topics. In its presentation to the commission the PSG pointed out that the WSWS had many more readers than the official magazine of the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Party SPD party. (According to alexa.com, the WSWS is in the top 15,000 most visited web sites in Germany. The SPD magazine lies around 75,000.)

The PSG also publishes the bi-monthly print magazine *gleichheit* dealing with current political and cultural issues, which is available not only at party events and via subscription but also at 44 bookshops and newsagents. The PSG also publishes additional material such as its periodical Auto Workers info leaflet, which is distributed to all the major car plants in Germany.

In a long and impressive list the PSG documented all of its public events during the past three years, including lectures on the history of the Russian Revolution, the significance of the political struggle of Leon Trotsky against Stalinism, and current issues such as the Egyptian revolution, the defense of the Greek working class against EU austerity programs, the struggle to defend the GM-Opel plant against closure, and its campaign in defense of Germany's best known author, Günter Grass. Some of these events were attended by several hundred visitors.

Following a declaration by the Federal Election Officer that he maintained his doubts concerning its party status, the PSG commissioned a prestigious law firm to defend its interests and announced that in the event of a denial of ballot status the party would immediately lodge an appeal with the Federal Constitutional Court.

In the event, the Election Committee unanimously approved the PSG's participation in the federal election at its meeting on Friday.

A total of 58 parties and political associations had applied to participate in the election. This was in excess of the total four years ago when the number of organizations applying for ballot status had already greatly increased. The reason for such a proliferation of parties is obvious. Many people are of the opinion that the prevailing political and social conditions are intolerable and must be changed. At the same time they quite rightly lack any confidence that the established parties represent their interests.

Those seeking political change no longer look to the parties already sitting in the German parliament, which all complain of loss of membership. Instead, new parties and organizations are being formed, often on the basis of limited and confused programs.

One new organization calls itself the party of "Common Sense", another the "Party of Reason", which puts forward a right-wing economic program. There is the "Party of Non-voters" and the "No" party, which seek to voice the general rejection of official politics. And then there are a number of parties which raise particular social problems, such as the "Party of the Oppressed", which advocates protection for tenants and opposes pension cuts. Its application was turned down by the Election Committee.

These parties are a confused expression of the broad rejection of official politics, and the established parties react to them with undisguised hostility.

Twenty political associations were rejected, invariably on the basis of formal objections. The Federal Election Commission, which presumes to decide on the authorization and refusal of parties, is itself an undemocratic and unelected body. It is chaired by the Federal Election Officer, who is appointed directly by the Interior Minister. He appoints the members of the Federal Election Commission from a list presented by the mainstream political parties.

The PSG will use the election campaign to propagate its socialist program, thereby providing a clear and progressive political alternative for the population. The PSG calls upon all readers of the WSWs to actively support its election campaign.



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