

The German election: The calm before the storm

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If the German federal election on September 22 were truly democratic, all the inhabitants of Europe would be allowed to participate. The decisions taken in Berlin affect the lives of millions of Europeans. The German government is the driving force behind the austerity programs that have plunged broad layers of the population throughout Europe into poverty and driven up unemployment to record levels.

But as things stand, not only the European, but also the German electorate will be excluded from any effective role in the election. The mainstream political parties have conspired to exclude every serious issue from the election campaign.

Not up for debate is the unresolved euro crisis, the preparations for another war in the Middle East, the systematic strengthening of the state apparatus, and the unrelenting assault on jobs, wages and social benefits. All of the political decisions that could disturb the artificially created sense of calm in the run-up to the vote have been put on hold during the election campaign.

This is despite the fact that plans for the next round of social attacks were drawn up long ago. Tens of thousands of layoffs are pending in the steel, auto and export industries. Business federations are pushing for further deregulation of the labor market, and additional billions of euros are slated to be slashed from education and social budgets in order to bail out ailing banks and indebted countries.

These plans will be put into action immediately after the September election, irrespective of which parties form the next government and which of the official candidates fills the post of chancellor. What passes for the more “left” parties of the political establishment—the Social Democrats, Greens and Left Party—have all proven themselves to be reliable agents of the ruling class.

The situation in Germany and throughout Europe recalls the proverbial calm before the storm. According to the

former chief economist of the European Central Bank, Jürgen Stark, the crisis will “escalate in the late fall.” As Stark told the financial newspaper *Handelsblatt*, “We are entering a new phase of crisis management.”

In anticipation of fierce class battles, all of the bourgeois parties—from the Christian Democrats to the Left Party—are closing ranks. They are following the example of Egypt, where liberal and pseudo-left forces that associated themselves with the revolt against Mubarak two years ago are now backing the military coup.

Key to the ruling elite’s preparation for upcoming class struggles is the systematic strengthening of the state apparatus and the destruction of democratic rights. Talk of the close links between Germany’s domestic intelligence services and the neo-Nazi gang that carried out ten racist murders has disappeared from the campaign debates. The same is true of revelations of mass surveillance of the population by the German Intelligence Service and the American National Security Agency (NSA) made public by Edward Snowden.

There is currently an open debate in academic circles about whether democracy serves any useful purpose. Three years ago, the political scientist Herfried Münkler publicly called for a “fresh, uninhibited view of the relationship between democracy and dictatorship”. The debate recalls the last years of the Weimar Republic, when the constitutional lawyer Carl Schmitt developed legal arguments to justify the Nazi dictatorship.

The ruling class is once again preparing dictatorial forms of rule. The working population, for its part, must prepare for the forthcoming class struggles. The most important prerequisite is the construction of a new party that will enable the working class to intervene independently in political events.

The dramatic events in Egypt show that the working class can secure its interests only with its own

revolutionary party. The Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG), the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, is participating in the general election precisely to build such a party.

The construction of a new workers' party demands a thorough understanding of the historical experiences of the twentieth century, embodied in the struggle of the Fourth International against Stalinism, social democracy and all forms of anti-Marxism, including the pseudo-Marxism of the 1960s student movement. It requires a political offensive against the Left Party and its pseudo-left appendages such as Marx21 and Socialist Alternative (SAV), which are adept at using leftist sounding rhetoric to disguise right-wing, pro-capitalist politics.

The PSG stands for a socialist program. It is not possible to solve a single social problem without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and placing them under democratic public control. The PSG rejects all forms of nationalism and fights for the unification of the European and international working class.

The PSG opposes the European Union, which is a tool of the corporations and banks. Its aim is to establish the United Socialist States of Europe. “Only through the unification of Europe on a socialist basis can the working class bring its own interests to bear, prevent Europe from relapsing into nationalism and war, and use the continent’s enormous wealth and productive forces to serve the interests of society as a whole,” the PSG election manifesto states.

We invite all readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to support the PSG campaign, visit our web site and follow our campaign meetings, many of which will be broadcast online.



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