

PSG election campaign takes to the streets of Berlin

Our correspondents
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As part of its campaign for the September 22 federal election, members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG) in Germany canvassed on the streets of Berlin last week.

A PSG team, including two of its leading candidates in Berlin, Ulrich Rippert and Christoph Dreier, took part in a campaign to win support in the Berlin suburb of Neukölln.

Situated in the south of the German capital, Neukölln has an official unemployment rate of over 17 percent. Unemployment levels for youth and immigrant workers in the suburb are much higher.

In the course of a number of animated discussions with passersby, Rippert and Dreier also gave interviews to reporters from the two main German public television stations, ARD and ZDF. The interviews will feature in short contributions in forthcoming television programs dealing with smaller parties participating in the election.

When asked by a reporter why the PSG was standing candidates in the election Rippert responded: “What voters confront in this election is best described as one big ‘Unity party’ extending from the right wing of the conservative CDU to the so-called left wing of the Left Party. None of these parties represent the interests of the working population.”

Rippert was then asked what the PSG would do differently?

“To answer your question it is necessary to look at the state of society. Twenty-three years ago, there was a lot of talk about the alleged failure of socialism. What we are experiencing now is the complete failure of capitalism. A small rich elite is able to increase its wealth enormously while poverty and misery spreads. The PSG declares that the only way to stop this process is to break the monopoly of power by the banks and big

business.

“This requires the mobilization of the broad working masses—the intervention of millions directly into political life—with the aim of establishing a workers’ government. This requires above all that the working class build its own political party—the PSG.

“The events during the past period in Greece and in Egypt, where massacres have been carried out by the army in the past week, are a prelude to the type of class confrontations which will take place in Germany and the rest of Europe during the coming period. Irrespective of which parties form the new government in Germany, after the election they will declare war on the working class. Plans have already been drawn up for cuts on jobs and social benefits which are barely imaginable.

Rippert was then asked the standpoint of the PSG regarding the Left Party:

“The only thing that is ‘left’ about the Left Party is its name. It is a thoroughly right-wing, bourgeois party. It supported the rescue of the banks.”

PSG supporters also spoke with passers-by who expressed their interest in the party’s campaign.

Helmut Kley is a worker who is retired due to poor health. He reported that he was under permanent pressure from the bureaucracy at the Job Centre in Neukölln, despite the fact that he already suffered three heart attacks. He had just come from talks with a lawyer to reclaim money which had been deducted from his income by the Job Centre.

“I am under permanent pressure from the Job Centre despite the fact that I am clearly in bad health,” he said. “I am being told to undertake work earning a few euros an hour alongside workers who I know are doing the same job for 15 euros an hour. It is naked exploitation and is taking place everywhere. At the same time, the

bankers are awarded billions.

“If you or I steal an ice cream worth a euro a few times we are threatened with jail. The bankers can do what they want and get away with it...and we pay the bill. There is no justice”

“Now with the euro and the EU we face growing inflation. Prices are going up everywhere while incomes are under attack, and none of the parties have any answer except more of the same.”

Sigurd Seeboth and his mother expressed their agreement with the central axis of the PSG election campaign, the increasing class divisions internationally resulting from rapidly growing inequality. Sigurd personally testified to the way in which workers were exploited today in Germany.

“I work as a cleaner at Schönefeld airport and earn a low wage, although I have a proper contract. As is the case with so many workplaces in Germany today, other workers at the airport employed on a temporary or agency basis earn even less than I do and have no social benefits. This is the case, even though many of these workers have proper training. You are always told when you are younger to get good training if you want to earn a good wage, but today this no longer applies.”

When asked about the role played by the trade unions at the airport, Sigurd expressed his scorn for the bureaucrats.

“As far as I am concerned they are in the pocket of management,” he said. “They are well aware of the low wages paid to many workers at the airport and do nothing about it. First the unions told us that there would be an equalization of our wage levels between East and West Germany in 2015, i.e., 23 years after the reunification of Germany! Now they have announced that any equalization will only take place in 2019. I have absolutely no time for them.”

Sigurd’s mother, who came from Italy, also expressed her concerns about the attacks taking place on social gains in Italy where her sister still lives.

“Where my sister lives in the south of Italy there still remain some social gains,” she said. “It is still possible to get a nursery place for children, and in comparison to Berlin, the rents are much cheaper, but I am very worried about fresh cuts to social spending, especially attacks on pensions. Basically you have a political Mafia running the country, and I do not just mean Berlusconi”



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