

PSG meeting in Berlin: Revolution and counterrevolution in Egypt

Our correspondents
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The German Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG) held its first international online meeting in Berlin on Sunday. The meeting, titled “Revolution and counterrevolution in Egypt—the political lessons” was the first in a series of meetings planned by the PSG as part of its campaign for the German election to be held on September 22. In keeping with the international character of the PSG election campaign, the meeting was live streamed in German with a simultaneous English translation to an international audience via the Internet.

In addition to the public in attendance at the meeting in Berlin, a total of 118 separate hosts registered to take part. These represented individuals or entire groups from Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, France, Turkey, Romania, the United States, Brazil, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Australia. In Germany the presentation was followed by hosts in Munich, Leipzig, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Essen.

Following introductory remarks by Ulrich Rippert, the general secretary of the PSG, Johannes Stern, leading PSG member and correspondent for the *World Socialist Web Site*, gave a detailed report on the developments and main political lessons to be drawn from the revolutionary movement of the working class during the past two years.

Using a vivid PowerPoint presentation, Stern noted: “More than two and a half years after the start of the Egyptian revolution and the fall of Mubarak, the military rulers are trying to rehabilitate their former leader. Many representatives of the old regime are back in their positions of power. The emergency laws used by Mubarak to suppress the Egyptian population for more than three decades are back in force. In recent weeks, thousands of protesters were killed by the military and security forces, which arbitrarily arrested and severely injured many thousands more.

“The interim government appointed by the military is now debating an official ban on the Muslim Brotherhood—as was the case in the days of the Mubarak dictatorship. Almost half of the organization’s leading cadres, including the deposed President Mohamed Mursi, have been taken into custody.”

Stern denounced the military coup as “a preemptive strike against the Egyptian working class, the driving force behind the revolution. Before the military intervened, millions of workers had gathered on the streets and squares across Egypt to protest against Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood and for the goals of the revolution—for better living conditions, jobs, higher wages and more democratic and social rights.”

Stern continued, “Now it seems that the wheel has been turned back to the time before January 25, 2011.” He asked, “How is it possible that after two years of bitter struggles against Mubarak for the counterrevolution to emerge with renewed force? Who bears the political responsibility?”

He explained: “In order to understand why the remnants of the old regime and imperialism were able to ‘turn back the clock’ despite the massive movement of the working class, one has to examine and understand the class character of the liberal and ‘left’ organizations.”

Stern stressed that the entire liberal and pseudo-left milieu in Egypt reacted with a sharp shift to the right as it realized that the demands of the working class went far beyond their own selfish interests. He noted: “The more the working class moved to the forefront in the course of the revolution, the more the affluent middle class layers feared for their social position. After more than two years of massive protests and strikes by the working class they are ready to support the return to dictatorship in order to defend their privileges and wealth against the threat of a socialist revolution.”

The speaker detailed how forces such as the National Salvation Front, the Egyptian Socialist Party and the Revolutionary Socialists had thrown their support behind the reactionary Tamarod conspiracy and thus “played the decisive role for the military and the old regime to derail the mass movement against Mursi behind their reactionary goal to reestablish a military dictatorship.” While Tamarod was supported and financed by reactionary figures such as billionaire tycoon Naguib Sawiris and Ahmed Shafiq, and called for a military coup, these forces sought to promote Tamarod as a revolutionary movement for more social and democratic rights.

Stern emphasized that the rightward movement of the affluent middle class is an international phenomenon that is bound up with the profound crisis of capitalism and the dynamic of the class struggle in Egypt and internationally.

He asked rhetorically: “Can there be any doubt about the role the Left Party will play here in Germany in the class battles to come?” He stressed the necessity to examine the Left Party’s attitude to the coup in Egypt to understand that it will play exactly the same role as its like-minded allies in Egypt in a situation when millions of workers take to the streets. He quoted from a recent Left Party document that has concluded that democracy has no future in Egypt and called for accommodation with the military junta.

Stern made clear that while the Egyptian working class had undoubtedly suffered a defeat, the army coup represents by no means the end of the revolution, but rather of its initial stage. He noted that the Egyptian Revolution is in the final analysis driven by the intensifying crisis of the world capitalist system and the next explosion is already developing below the surface. He stressed that the decisive problem facing the Egyptian and international working class is the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The working class is entering a new era of revolutionary struggles, he said, and “the decisive task is to assimilate the political lessons of the Egyptian Revolution to prepare for the struggles to come. This means the construction of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Egypt, throughout the Middle East and internationally.”

Following the main report there was an opportunity for those following the presentation to post comments and questions. Among the large number of comments were the following:

From Romania: “This international conference is of enormous importance. It adds to the crucial role of the WSWS in clarifying critical issues of international perspective.”

From Sri Lanka: “A brilliant summation of the events that unraveled and continue in Egypt and in drawing their international significance and relevance. Greetings from Sri Lanka!”

Among the many questions posed by participants across the globe were the following:

From England: “Can you give more information about the close ties between Tamarod and the Revolutionary Socialists?”

The same question came from Sheffield, England and Kansas (US): “What is the connection between the current developments in Syria and Egypt?”

From Germany: “Could the speaker say something about the role played in the suppression of the Egyptian working class by the German government? Is it possible to specify

what role was played by the Left Party?”

Stern spent some time at the end of the presentation to provide detailed answers to the most important questions.

He stressed that there was a deep connection between the most recent developments in Syria and the situation in Egypt. “The imperialist powers, and above all the US were stepping up their preparations for a military intervention against the Syrian regime on the basis of fraudulent claims of a gas attack on civilians in Damascus. The question should be asked: who benefits from such a gas attack carried out just a short distance away from the hotel where UN inspectors have set up their headquarters on the same day as the attack? While the war drive against Syria is bound up with geopolitical interests it is also directed at countering the powerful offensive launched by the working class in Egypt.”

Following the event WSWS reporters spoke with Nikolas H., who was attending a PSG meeting for the first time. Nikolas declared he was very impressed with the meeting: “I thought it was very good. What the speaker said made a lot of sense and I learnt a lot about the situation in Egypt.”

Nikolas had no time for the rest of the parties represented in the election campaign. “They all want to manipulate us and they are all implicated in the surveillance conspiracy against the population revealed by Edward Snowden”, he said. “They all support the capitalist system”. He expressed considerable interest in the forthcoming PSG meeting in two weeks devoted to the theme of the political lessons to be drawn from the Snowden revelations.

The international online meeting on Sunday undoubtedly represents a considerable development in the work of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In the remaining weeks leading up to the September 22 German federal election, the PSG will hold three additional international online meetings and culminate its campaign with a “European workers’ rally against war, dictatorship and social cuts” in Berlin the day before the election.



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