

Germany: Socialist Equality Party holds antiwar rally in Berlin

Our correspondents
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One day before the German federal election the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG) held a rally in Berlin to mobilize against the threat of imperialist military intervention in Syria.

PSG members and supporters assembled at Berlin's central Alexanderplatz and a number of the party's candidates gave short addresses warning that, despite the diplomatic maneuvers during the past week, the danger of a US led attack on Syria remained very real. Speakers pointed out that German political leaders were aware there was mass opposition to military intervention and had deliberately not addressed the preparations for war, fearful this would cost them votes in Sunday's elections.

While the rally was taking place, a massive fleet of US ships was assembled off the coast of Syria, confronting a number of Russian warships that were also moving into the region. The German navy also had a vessel in the area as part of the imperialist flotilla.

Passersby listened attentively to the speeches and many took flyers for the European Workers Conference held on Saturday afternoon. A full report of the European Workers Conference against War, Dictatorship and Social Cuts will be published later this week.

Ceesay, from Bremen, came across the demonstration on Alexanderplatz by chance and supported it instantly. The attack on Syria is an imperialist crime," he said, "exactly as it says on your poster. They want this war to gain access to Iran and control the oil supplies. To do this, they have supported the rebels, so they can plunge the country into civil war. Just as in Iraq, this war is based on lies."

Ceesay is an apprentice heating engineer, and works installing wind turbines. He sets his hopes on the Internet: "We young people are all linked up on the

Internet. The powers-that-be developed this technology without knowing that we can now use it against them." He has lived in Germany for 23 years, he said, but he remains connected with the Gambia, where he was born: "We are connected globally."

Shahed, a young woman from Iraq, also came across the rally by chance. She declared herself in agreement. In Iraq she had witnessed the intervention of 2003. "I am totally against every war, I hate war!" Shahed said. "I have witnessed the bombing of Baghdad. I can still see the corpses in the streets and the debris before me. To this day, I am receiving treatment as a result of this war."

For many passersby and observers, the rally prompted discussions and brought back memories.

An older couple stopped. "We are fundamentally opposed to war," they said. "US imperialism wants to invade Syria. For this, the rebels were artificially built up." The man explained how he witnessed the bombing of Dresden as a school pupil. "We have to explain to the young ones, our children and descendants: Such a thing should never happen again." A teacher added, "We must learn from history. The official parties completely hide the historical issues."

An older man said, "It's right that you take to the streets against the war. But one must not forget the social issues. War is so expensive, they will soon have no money for pensions." A woman from Leipzig recalled, "Exactly 24 years ago when the Berlin Wall came down we experienced what the capitalists are capable of. All the services were destroyed that had formed the basis of social existence in East Germany. Suddenly, there was no more money there."

"You know," she concluded, "the fall of the Wall and all the attacks that were associated with it are as present for me now as if it was yesterday."

Vassilis, a Greek teacher who works in Germany, travelled to Berlin to support the rally. He explained, “The PSG is the only party that is taking to the streets against war. The danger of war has not been lifted. The war has probably just been postponed”.

“The same forces stand behind it that are allowing Greece to be destroyed,” he continued. “I am very disappointed about what the government is doing together with the EU. What we hear from Greece is terrible. Social misery is growing.”

He told of the five-day teachers’ strike by his colleagues in Greece: “Over 90 percent of teachers participated. They are fighting not only for their wages, but for the entire education system. Classes are being destroyed by the cuts and layoffs of teachers. It happens that children fall over from hunger during class.”

Vassilis is working at a Greek school in Germany “We too feel the cuts,” he said. “Teachers have been dismissed, and in the last year, class sizes were increased to over 30. This year, we had no English teacher, another Greek school has no math teacher, and the computer science teacher was removed. We are greatly understaffed and can only cover all subjects with difficulty, even though we now have more students as a result of the wave of emigration. Often, there is such chaos that no one can teach. Many classes are cancelled, and this often affects the very subjects that you need urgently.”

Vassilis said that it is important that all workers demonstrate together. “Ten years ago, 15 million people took to the streets against the Iraq war, but today we hear nothing against war, even by the so-called left.”

Jamal Ali Khaan found out about the rally on the Internet, and traveled to support it. He said, “It is rarely enough that people just take to the streets against this war. You get almost no attention from the public, so I’m here to support it.”

He himself comes from Syria, although he is a German citizen. “What is happening is obvious: it is about national advantages and geostrategic interests. I would buy the official claim that it is about human rights in Syria if Germany wasn’t simultaneously providing armoured vehicles and weapons to Saudi Arabia, a country where people are being stoned and flogged.”

Jamal Ali Khaan has relatives in Damascus and

elsewhere. “Previously,” he said, “my Syrian friends and neighbours, we didn’t know whether someone was Sunni or Shiite. That was not an issue. The West has succeeded in our country—and not just our country—in establishing that people not only identify with religion, but on this basis determine friendship and enmity.”

Marwin, who supported the demonstration, said, “I do not believe in these war preparations against Syria. This intervention against a country does not serve the people who live there, but only the interests of the NATO powers and big politics who want to exploit this region. They are willing to kill hundreds of thousands to this end.

“The media has embarked on a massive propaganda campaign. This has already taken on fascist undertones. This open warmongering is aimed at getting ordinary people to support the war. Even the so-called left-wing newspapers are showing where they stand and whose tune they march to. They do not represent the interests of ordinary people.”

When asked what he thought of the Left Party, Marwin said, “In the election campaign, all the parties talk quite differently than usual. It’s no different for the Left Party. Today, it claims to be against war—but you need only look back just a little, then it exposes itself very quickly. Previously, it had also advocated the war and supported the violent opposition, and now for electoral reasons it opposes the war.

“The interests of workers are the same internationally, so they must unite across borders.”



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