

Germany: Left Party leader attacks PSG election campaign

Ulrich Rippert
28 September 2013

Last Saturday, one day before the general election, Left Party deputy and vice president of the Bundestag (parliament) Petra Pau gave an interview to the N-TV news channel. In the interview, Pau criticized the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG) which she accused of clinging to the “doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat” and advocating an undemocratic “vanguardist standpoint”.

Responding to a question as to whether she was prepared to talk with other left-wing parties “such as the DKP [German Communist Party], the MLPD [Marxist Leninist Party of Germany] and the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG)”, Pau answered: “I doubt that some of them represent left-wing positions. Some of these Trotskyist splinter groups have still not abandoned the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It’s not left-wing if you claim to be a vanguard and want to dictate to people what is good for them.”

Petra Pau studied Marxist social science at the “Karl Marx Party School” in East Berlin in the GDR (former East Germany), and knows very well the role the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” plays in Marxist theory. Nevertheless, she resorts to hackneyed anti-communist propaganda to insinuate that the PSG has undemocratic objectives.

It is nothing new for bourgeois ideologists to denote the Stalinist dictatorship in the Soviet Union and its satellite regimes in Eastern Europe and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a dictatorship of the proletariat, and blame Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels for the Stalinist repression. That Petra Pau repeatedly regurgitates this Great Lie of the 20th century says a great deal about the right-wing bourgeois character of the Left Party. Pau speaks explicitly against a workers’ government that places the interests of working people above the profit interests of big business.

Let us start with the facts. In developing a scientific

theory of society, Marx and Engels demonstrated that the history of mankind is a history of class struggles. Following early primitive society, in which equality was based on generalised want, class differentiation developed with the growth of human communities.

The development of, and changes in class society were determined by the conditions, or rather the advances of the methods of production. At certain points, the development of production came into conflict with the old social relations. Thus began a period of social change (revolution). The modern industrial proletariat first became visible in the French Revolution over two hundred years ago—and even more so in the Revolution of 1848—and it is from this period that the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” dates.

“Dictatorship” here means no more than “class rule”. But because in the past and still today, privileged social classes were always a minority, their rule was always associated with repressive measures against the majority of society; unlike the proletariat. Emerging with industrialization, it represents a qualitatively new stage of social development. If class rule in the past was a result of the inability to produce enough for all the people, modern industry overcame this limitation.

The proletariat embodies the great majority of the working population. Its class rule is not based on the oppression of the majority by a privileged minority, but vice versa: With the rule of the proletariat, the dictatorship of the majority over the minority, i.e. real democracy, begins. Therefore the “dictatorship of the proletariat” actually signifies the last stage of class rule, and initiates the transition to a classless, socialist society.

But because such a form of rule by the majority is bound up with the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and the resulting privileges of today’s elite, the bourgeoisie not only fuels the greatest possible confusion about these issues, but has from the

outset rigorously suppressed and fought any independent movement of working people aimed at seizing political power. In 1871, when the workers of Paris attempted for the first time to establish a workers' government, all members of the Commune were sentenced to death and executed.

Twenty years later, Engels wrote: "The German philistine has once more fallen into wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the proletariat. Well, gentlemen, you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat." (Friedrich Engels, Introduction to: *The Civil War in France* by Karl Marx, March 18, 1891)

Petra Pau makes clear how relevant these words of Engels are today. Her rejection of a workers' government that subordinates the profit interests of big business to the interests and needs of the vast majority of working people goes hand in hand with the defence of the current dictatorship of the banks.

Pau has been Vice President of the Bundestag since 2006. She played a key role in pushing the so-called bank bailouts through parliament in expedited proceedings. Without consultation, without plenary discussion, and without allowing sufficient time for the members of parliament to even read the extensive texts, laws were passed in European parliaments handing over €1,600 trillion to the banks. Now these funds are being recouped through austerity measures and cuts in social spending.

When was the population asked whether it agrees to such a fundamental redistribution of social wealth? If this procedure is not characteristic of a de facto dictatorship by finance capital, then what is?

In this situation, the Left Party plays its well-known cynical double game. The Left Party agreed to the expedited proceedings, which can take place only with the consent of all parties; then in the substantive parliamentary vote, in which a large majority was certain without the Left Party, it voted against. Party leaders Oskar Lafontaine and Gregor Gysi later said that they regarded the "bailout" as essential.

The same applies to all other political issues. One must only recall the most recent parliamentary election campaign, in which every serious political dispute was avoided. All the parliamentary parties agreed on the essential issues. Regardless of which coalition of parties the coming government includes, its economic and social policies will be determined in the boardrooms of the major corporations and banks, and will be dictated by big

business.

This is especially the case on foreign policy. In the past too, the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) have been involved in imperialist wars in Afghanistan without the population being asked. The next government will react much more strongly to American pressure for greater German participation in the war in Syria and other countries. Despite enormous opposition to war in the population, this policy will be brutally enforced.

But this is still not enough. Important areas of social life are completely excluded from formal democracy and do not permit the least democratic control and participation by the population. In the boardrooms of the large corporations and banks, decisions are made every day that directly and indirectly greatly affect the lives of working people, but they are not subject to the least democratic control or even justification.

Therefore, the PSG calls for the nationalization of the banks and big corporations, and the establishment of democratic control over the economy by the people. Only when the working class conquers political power and establishes workers' governments can democracy really be created.

There is also an even more threatening aspect to Pau's attack on the PSG. Since last year, Pau has represented the Left Party in the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into the far-right National Socialist Underground terrorist group. Although the security services are blatantly implicated in the murders carried out by NSU, Pau has repeatedly emphasized her close collaboration with the leadership of the intelligence services.

When one recalls that the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat played an important role in the banning of the KPD [German Communist Party] in 1956, Pau's interview reads increasingly like a denunciation of the PSG to the security agencies.

Emerging from the Stalinist dictatorship in the GDR, the Left Party only differentiates itself from the other parties in that it has even fewer democratic traditions and principles. It regards its main task as the suppression of any social movement from below, and calls on the state prosecutor to prevent the building of a revolutionary socialist party.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact