

Against the European Union, for the United Socialist States of Europe!

Statement by the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit and Socialist Equality Party (UK) on the 2014 European Elections

10 January 2014

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) in Germany and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Britain are standing candidates in the European elections in May 2014.

Our aim is to unite working people throughout Europe in the struggle for a socialist society based on social equality, rather than the enrichment of a few at the expense of the vast majority.

Resistance to the austerity diktats of the European Union (EU), the attacks on democratic rights and imperialist war are growing everywhere. What is lacking is a party that calls things by their name, throws down the gauntlet to the ruling class and provides the growing opposition with a clear socialist and international orientation. Our campaign is focused on the building of such a party, with sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International throughout Europe.

We seek to mobilise a mass political and social movement of the European working class against big business, its parties and its governments. We do not advocate the reform of capitalism, but the struggle for its overthrow. We reject the European Union and all its undemocratic institutions, including the European Parliament. We stand against every form of anti-immigrant chauvinism, racism and nationalism, including the advocacy of separatism in Catalonia, Northern Italy, Belgium and Scotland that only sows further divisions between workers at a time when united struggle against the common enemy is essential.

Our aim is the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe. Only the formation of workers' governments in every country and the unification of Europe on a socialist basis can prevent the decline of Europe into nationalism and war, and create the conditions for utilising and developing its extensive resources and productive forces in the interests of society as a whole.

The crisis of world capitalism

The 2014 European elections take place in the midst of the deepest crisis of capitalism since the eve of the Second World War.

In the last decades, technology, production and trade have made enormous progress. The Internet, modern modes of transport and transnational production have closely interwoven the world economy and raised its productive capacity. But instead of raising the living standards and cultural level of working people, these achievements have led to the unprecedented enrichment of a tiny minority.

Control over the complex world economy lies in the hands of private corporations, which subordinate all economic concerns to their short-term

profit interests.

The monopoly of economic life by a grasping financial oligarchy gives the crisis of modern capitalism an especially malignant character. In autumn 2008, the investment banks and hedge funds brought the world financial system to the brink of ruin with their criminal speculation. Governments that had sanctioned their activities responded by pumping billions into the financial sector—with Europe's banks receiving €1.6 trillion, according to the European Commission. In reality, much more has been made available, with Britain's banks alone receiving over £1.1 trillion.

The price is being paid by Europe's workers, as every government imposes savage cuts in jobs, wages, and essential social services.

The new "Age of Austerity" is the product of a social counterrevolution aimed at plunging millions into abject misery, imposing the untrammelled rule of the banks and major corporations. It finds political expression in the dictatorial actions of the "Troika"—the European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank.

This policy of deliberate mass impoverishment confirms the reactionary character of the European Union. It does not embody the unity of the European peoples, but rather the dictatorship of the most powerful economic and financial interests over Europe. It forms the framework in which the European powers organise their attacks on the working class, carry out their conflicts, and plan their wars in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Above all, Germany is using the euro in order to strengthen its domination in Europe and dictate a destructive course of austerity measures to the other countries. In this way, the EU itself is creating the centrifugal forces that it claims it seeks to overcome.

In Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Greece, the future planned for workers across Europe is laid out. Greece has seen a level of economic and social regression without precedent. The average wage has been slashed by 40 percent. One in three adults and one in two young people are without work. Education, health care and Greece's infrastructure have been largely destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of Greeks are currently deprived of any source of income or health insurance.

No European country has been spared similar measures. Anodyne phrases such as "budget consolidation" and "labour market reforms" become the byword for a never-ending attack on the rights and achievements of working people.

In the next years, close to a third of the European Union's population, 145 million people, face a life of poverty due to austerity programmes that have already left a quarter of Europe's workers facing economic instability and social despair. Despite enormous technological progress capitalism has nothing to offer to youth but unemployment, poverty and war. Those who still have work generally receive just a pittance or are

forced to carry out unpaid internships. Schools, universities and training centres are being privatised, closed or subject to devastating savings cuts.

Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK will be ranked among the most unequal countries in the world. One in two working families has been directly affected by the loss of jobs or reduction of working hours.

Even in Europe's largest economy, Germany, one in three now works in precarious conditions and young people can rarely find a regular job. A third of a million depend on state benefit payments and a million pensioners are impoverished. One in six are at risk of poverty, largely because high employment levels conceal the fact that almost a quarter of the population (22 percent) and a third of those aged 15 to 24 years are without a full-time contract. This is set to worsen thanks to the Social Democrats agreeing to join an austerity coalition with Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats.

In France, the Socialist Party government's tax hikes, pension cuts and austerity measures have made it France's most unpopular regime since World War II.

The fate of immigrants and refugees highlights the reactionary role of the European Union. Since 1990, 25,000 people have lost their lives trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean. In October 2013 alone, more than twice as many people died in one day off the Italian island of Lampedusa than the total number of deaths at the Berlin Wall in the 28 years of its existence.

Those refugees able to reach European soil are denied all basic rights, interned in camps, or exploited as slaves. The same applies to intra-European migrants fleeing the consequences of EU austerity policies. They are forced to work for starvation wages or, like the Roma, subject to state-sponsored racist campaigns.

The establishment parties react to growing opposition to their policies by increasing the powers of the security apparatus, stepping up mass surveillance, destroying democratic rights and encouraging far-right parties.

Thanks to the courageous actions of Julian Assange, Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden, Europe's workers and youth have been made aware of brutal war crimes and the existence of a surveillance state apparatus prying into the lives of every man, woman and child in the world. Such an apparatus has nothing to do with fighting "terrorism". It is a mechanism to facilitate the brutal repression of domestic political and social opposition.

The stench of police state dictatorship is especially chilling, given that 2014 marks the centenary of the outbreak of World War One; the beginning of 30 years of barbarism, in the course of which 100 million people met a violent death on the battlefields and in the hail of bombs of two world wars, in civil wars and in the concentration camps of the Nazis.

A century later, not a single problem of that time has been resolved. Growing international tensions, conflicts over trade and currencies, and aggressive imperialist policies against the Middle East, Russia and China lend the world situation an ever more explosive character. The US is deploying its massive military machinery in order to compensate for its economic decline, and to divert abroad the explosive social tensions at home. After wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, Washington is also turning against China in order to assert its world hegemony.

The European powers are also throwing themselves once again into the struggle for spheres of influence, markets and resources. Since the Iraq war, Britain has again proved to be Washington's closest ally. France is falling upon its old colonies in Africa and the Middle East. And Germany, which, following the crimes of the Nazis was forced to abstain from international military operations, is reasserting itself as a global power by pushing into eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Under these circumstances, a tiny spark would again suffice—as in the 1914 assassination of Arch Duke Ferdinand in Sarajevo—to turn a regional conflict into a global conflagration.

The building of a new workers party

The reactionary policies of the ruling class are unleashing outrage and opposition everywhere. But this resistance finds no political expression.

All those parties that once professed to reform capitalism in the interests of workers have become the ruthless exponents of social devastation and militarism. In many European countries, social democratic leaders head governments that have declared war on the working class and are regarded with disdain and hatred.

The same applies to the Greens, who today only differ from the conservative parties in matters of lifestyle.

The trade unions are no longer workers' organizations, but privileged bureaucratic apparatuses. Their officials are handsomely paid to intimidate and oppress workers. Today, every dismissal, wage cut and plant closure bears their signature. When they cannot completely prevent protests and strikes, the bureaucracy ensures that they lead nowhere. In Greece, there have been no less than 35 general strikes against austerity, and on every occasion the unions have sought to ensure they remain ineffective.

An especially repugnant role is played by those such as the Left Party in Germany, the Front de Gauche in France and SYRIZA in Greece. They employ "left" phrases to deceive the working class, while at the same time defending capitalism and the EU. Wherever they enter into government, they attack the working class with the same vigour as all other bourgeois parties. The German Left Party has shown this in many state and local governments. The chair of SYRIZA, Alexis Tsipras, who heads the European Left Party, secured this role by travelling to Washington in order to assure the leaders of world imperialism that they have nothing to fear from a SYRIZA government.

Numerous pseudo-left organisations can be found inside and around these parties, where they seek to provide them with a progressive veneer. These groups, such as Germany's SAV and Marx21, Britain's Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party and Left Unity, and the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) in France, represent better-off layers of the upper-middle class, not working people. They see the crisis as an opportunity to further their own careers and to gain lucrative posts in government, the state apparatus and the union bureaucracy. These organisations vehemently oppose a revolutionary perspective, work closely with state security organs in many countries and play a key role in the attacks on the working class.

Opinion polls predict that far-right chauvinist parties such as the Front National in France and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) will make considerable gains in the European elections. These parties utilise the slavish defence of the EU by the so-called "left" parties to divert anger with the EU into reactionary channels.

The events in Egypt contain vital lessons. Mass revolutionary uprisings led to the ouster of the dictator Hosni Mubarak and later the Muslim Brotherhood. Nevertheless, the military junta was able to return to power in large part because the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) opposed the building of a revolutionary workers' party and allied itself with the most reactionary forces.

A new workers' party can only be built against the corrupt bourgeois parties and their pseudo-left hangers-on. The PSG and SEP differ from them in every way. Our strength is our programme, our principles and our unbroken tradition. We stand in the continuity of the great revolutionary Marxists—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg.

Our international movement, the Fourth International, is rooted in the struggle of the Trotskyist Left Opposition against Stalinism.

Stalin headed a privileged bureaucracy, which suppressed workers'

democracy, murdered the Bolshevik leaders of the October Revolution, and was responsible for the greatest international defeats of the working class. It proved to be the grave-digger of the first workers' state established by the October Revolution of 1917. Its counterrevolution reached its high point in 1991, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reintroduction of capitalism and rule of a criminal oligarchy.

The bitterest price has been paid by the workers of eastern Europe, who have been reduced to paupers—a source of cheap labour for European corporations who, as with Bulgaria and Romania, are witch-hunted and scapegoated for the mass unemployment, wage cuts and social devastation produced by capitalism.

Stalinism's efforts to destroy the Marxist leadership, socialist culture and political consciousness of the working class has been essential in enabling the bourgeoisie to vastly enrich themselves, without unleashing mass revolutionary struggles. But resistance is growing, and many, above all young workers, are now seeking a new perspective and leadership.

They will find this in the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement. It alone embodies the historic traditions of the struggle waged by the Left Opposition and the Fourth International to defend the programme and perspective of world socialist revolution against Stalinism's crimes. It alone offers a way forward based upon a renewal of socialist internationalism and the building of new and genuinely socialist parties—sections of the ICFI—throughout Europe.

We appeal to all readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to support our campaign practically and financially, vote for our candidates, contact the PSG and the SEP, and join our party.



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