

No to war! Vote PSG!

European election statement of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party of Germany)

18 April 2014

One hundred years after the outbreak of the First World War and 75 years after the start of the Second World War, Europe once again stands on the brink of disaster. The German government and its allies in NATO are deliberately stoking up a conflict with Russia that threatens to lead to a nuclear catastrophe.

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG—Socialist Equality Party) implacably opposes this war-mongering policy. We appeal to all those who are not prepared to accept the threat of war: Vote for the PSG, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, in the May 25 European elections! Make this the first step in building an anti-war movement that unites working people in Europe and around the world in opposition to war and capitalism! After the death of tens of millions in two world wars and the unspeakable crimes of the Holocaust, Europe must not be allowed yet again to be turned into a battlefield of imperialist war!

The return of German militarism

We accuse the German government and all of the parliamentary parties of systematically reviving German militarism behind the backs of the people. The same ruling circles, banks and corporations that unleashed two world wars and committed heinous crimes are again pursuing great power politics and making plans to use military force.

The opening shot in this political campaign was fired by German president Joachim Gauck in his speech marking the Day of German Unity last October. He declared that Germany was “not an island” that could stay out of “political, economic and military conflicts.”

Then, at the Munich Security Conference in early February, Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen announced the end of the “policy of military restraint.” In future, Germany would “intervene more decisively and substantially” in areas of international crisis.

Since then, Berlin has pursued a ruthless foreign policy. As if Hitler’s war of extermination had never happened, German imperialism is reviving once again its traditional “drive to the East.”

In February, Germany, together with the US and in close collaboration with fascist parties and militia groups, organised a coup in Kiev that brought a right-wing, anti-Russian regime to power. It was a deliberate provocation. Russia’s reaction was predictable and had been taken into account in advance. The nationalist regime of Russian president Vladimir Putin could not accept the most powerful military alliance in the world advancing directly to the Russian border. It annexed Crimea in response to the coup.

Since then, the German government and its allies have used the crisis

they provoked in Ukraine to rearm and encircle Russia militarily. NATO has deployed planes and ships in the vicinity of Russia, is holding military exercises near the border, and is preparing to accept Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as alliance members. High-ranking military brass in Germany are calling for the reintroduction of conscription and the appropriation of new tanks and combat drones.

The media is accompanying this militarisation campaign with a deafening propaganda barrage aimed at intimidating any critical voices. It is employing lies and distortions reminiscent of the techniques of Hitler’s propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels. It plays down the collaboration of the US, Germany, the European Union (EU) and NATO with fascists in Kiev, and presents Russia as the “aggressor,” claiming Moscow is seeking to “roll over Ukraine from the East” (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*).

In reality, it is the scribblers in the editorial offices who are the real war-mongers. The co-editor of *Die Zeit*, Joseph Joffe, agitates against “Russia-appeasers” and demands more tanks and soldiers to curb Russia’s “Tsarism forever.” The conservative *Die Welt* demands that Germany “be ready to use an electro-shocker” and “rearm” if it wants “to gain a hearing worldwide.”

An all-party conspiracy

The PSG is the only party that opposes the revival of German militarism. All other parties, including the Left Party, are conspiring against the population, which is broadly opposed to militaristic great power politics.

The grand coalition government of the Social Democrats (SPD) and Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) has placed militarism at the heart of its policies. The SPD and its foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, have taken on the role of cheerleaders for militarism and war.

The party is marking the 100th anniversary of its support for the First World War with an outpouring of sordid war-mongering against Russia. Party Chairman Sigmar Gabriel has accused Moscow of “obviously being willing to let tanks roll across European borders.” The party’s defence spokesman, Rainer Arnold, is already planning the next military campaign in the East, calling for a reconsideration of “the uncontrolled reduction of the tank fleet within NATO.”

Ten years after the adoption of the Hartz laws cutting welfare and imposing more “flexible” labour regulations, the SPD is proving once again that it has both feet firmly in the camp of big money. The highly paid politicians, top-level civil servants, middle class businessmen and trade union bureaucrats who set the tone in the party no longer seek to reconcile workers with capitalism through social reforms. Instead, they defend capitalism with ruthless attacks on the working class and

aggressive great power politics.

The war-mongering of the SPD is surpassed only by the Greens. The affluent upper middle class that makes up the clientele of this party fully supports the interests of German imperialism. Ever since joining the federal government in 1998, the former pacifists have beat the drum for foreign missions by the German Army and wars launched in the name of “human rights” and “humanitarianism.” Green leaders and the party-affiliated Heinrich Böll Foundation actively supported the fascist-led coup in Kiev. Now, they accuse the government of being indecisive against the “Russian aggressors.”

The most degenerate of all the pro-war parties is the Left Party. It drops its pacifist cloak precisely at the point when German militarism prepares to return to the world stage. In April, for the first time, Left Party parliamentary deputies voted for an overseas deployment of the Bundeswehr (German army). In Ukraine, too, the Left Party supports the aggressive course of the German government. An official statement by the party’s executive makes Russia responsible for the “collision course” and condemns Russia’s actions in Crimea for “breaching international law.”

Pseudo-left currents such as Marx21 and Socialist Alternative (SAV), active inside the Left Party, support this course by glorifying the fascist riots on the Maidan as a “democratic popular uprising.”

It is no accident that the Left Party has now discarded its pacifist cloak. It has always defended capitalism. While it occasionally dispenses left phrases in order to deceive workers, in practice it supports the most right-wing policies. With the intensification of the class struggle, it is openly taking the side of the ruling class.

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit fights tirelessly against the corrosive and paralysing influence of the Left Party. We are building a party that represents the interests of working people and combines a rejection of militarism and war with the struggle against its cause, capitalism.

Capitalism and war

As in 1914 and 1939, the reason for the revival of militarism is the mortal crisis of world capitalism. A quarter of a century ago, when the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed, bourgeois propaganda heralded a new era of prosperity and peace. But what actually followed was economic decline, welfare cuts, attacks on democratic rights, and war.

Capitalism lost all its inhibitions and showed itself again in all its brutality. While a small minority accumulates untold wealth, the majority struggles against falling wages, unemployment and poverty. The ruling class is responding everywhere to the aggravation of social contradictions with police state methods and militarism.

The US, together with its European allies, has attacked and devastated Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Now, German imperialism has decided to cast off the restrictions that were imposed on it following the crimes of the Nazi regime and move to the forefront of the struggle for world domination.

It is responding to the profound crisis of European capitalism. All attempts to unite Europe economically and socially have failed. The brutal austerity measures with which Brussels and Berlin reacted to the 2008 financial crisis have exacerbated conflicts between EU member states and strained social relations to the breaking point.

Within the EU, there are officially more than 26 million unemployed, a rate of 11 percent. There is abject poverty in many regions, especially in Eastern European countries that were incorporated into the EU 10 years ago, and in the countries hit by austerity programmes dictated by the EU and the International Monetary Fund. But even in supposedly rich

Germany, one in three employees are working under precarious conditions and 6 million people depend on welfare.

The revival of militarism is the response of the German government to this crisis. It is aimed at quenching the hunger of big business for markets, raw materials and cheap labour; diverting the social tensions within Europe and Germany; and welding together the EU on the basis of an aggressive foreign policy. The EU was previously based mainly on economic issues such as the free movement of capital and goods and the common currency. In future, its internal cohesion is to be based on the struggle against a common external enemy.

The costs of militarism

The costs of militarism are to be borne by the working class. Funding for military rearmament will be derived from further cuts in social spending. The young generation will be turned into cannon fodder for war. Society will be militarised and democratic rights destroyed.

The US government used the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as the pretext to place the whole of society on a permanent war footing and attack fundamental democratic rights. The American intelligence agencies have set up an apparatus of surveillance that puts those of Hitler’s Gestapo and Stalin’s KGB in the shade. US drones kill hundreds of alleged terrorists and innocent civilians, including US citizens, without charges or trial.

The crisis in Ukraine is to serve the same purpose for Germany. The open collaboration of the German government with the fascists of Svoboda and the Right Sector is a political warning. It has created a precedent for all of Europe. It can only mean that the ruling class in Germany will rely on right-wing and fascist forces to intimidate and terrorise the German working class. In France, Greece, Hungary and other European countries, fascist forces are already increasing their influence and gaining increased support in the ruling class.

Build the PSG!

Only a broad movement of the international working class can counter the danger of war and fascism.

Many workers in the US, Europe, Ukraine and Russia regard the official war propaganda with suspicion or outright hostility. They know, or sense, that the slogans of freedom, democracy and national independence are false and hypocritical, and that what is really at stake are imperialist interests—world power, markets, raw materials, cheap labour, profits.

What they lack is a party that calls things by their right names, declares war on the ruling class, and provides the resistance to war with a clear socialist and internationalist orientation. The construction of such a party is at the heart of the European election campaign of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit of Germany and the Socialist Equality Party of the UK—the German and British sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The ICFI embodies the historical traditions of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International, which defended the programme and perspective of world socialist revolution against Stalinism.

We call upon working people throughout Europe, including Ukraine and Russia, to build a broad, international anti-war movement. We call on them to make the European elections a plebiscite against the war-mongers and their accomplices in the media. A vote for the PSG is a vote against

war.

We reject NATO and the EU. Our goal is the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe. Only the creation of workers' governments in each country and the unification of Europe on a socialist basis can prevent the relapse of the continent into nationalism and war, and create the conditions for its rich resources and productive forces to be used and developed for the benefit of society as a whole.

Support the European election campaign of the PSG practically and financially! Read the *World Socialist Web Site*, attend our meetings, vote for our candidates, make contact with the PSG and become a member!



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