

PSG holds successful final election meeting

Our correspondents

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The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party, PSG) concluded its European election campaign on Saturday with a well attended meeting in Berlin Tempelhof.

The meeting was chaired by Elisabeth Zimmermann, a PSG candidate and member of the party's executive. She referred to the extraordinary conditions under which the European elections were taking place, saying, "The German and US governments are once again preparing for war." This was why the PSG had placed the struggle against war at the heart of its campaign.

Peter Schwarz, Secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), was the first speaker and dealt with the role of the European Union. Projections anticipated that 60 percent of voters would stay away from the polls and that EU opponents would achieve strong gains, he said. "Half a century after the Treaty of Rome and 22 years since Maastricht, this vote provides a devastating verdict on the EU."

Contrary to the claims of its supporters, the EU does not stand for welfare, freedom, democracy and peace, Schwarz said. For the overwhelming majority of the population, it had encouraged declining wages and social conditions, work speed-up and bitter poverty. The social catastrophe imposed by the EU troika in Greece served as an example for the whole of Europe. "As a consequence of the EU's austerity programmes, one third of Europe's residents, that is 145 million people, will soon be living in poverty and economic insecurity," he said.

This social counter-revolution was incompatible with democracy, noted Schwarz. That was why a massive spying apparatus had been built up over the past ten years, not only in the US with the NSA, but also in Europe.

The European Union showed its undemocratic character most clearly with the fate of immigrants and refugees, said Schwarz. "The EU is a barricaded fortress. Those who manage to overcome barbed wire fences or a passage over the sea end up in prison like criminals and will be sent back." Since 1990, 25,000 people have died attempting to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, he added.

The European Union's entire history confirms the Marxist view that Europe cannot be united from above, by the capitalist governments. This was, as Leon Trotsky explained in 1917, a "revolutionary task of the European proletariat in its struggle against imperialist protectionism and its weapon, militarism."

Europe was moving towards a social explosion, Schwarz explained. "Beneath the surface, a huge storm is brewing. That is what we are preparing for."

While official politics is dominated by the established right-wing parties and the extreme right, in Europe there were "millions of

people who are not prepared to accept war, poverty and misery."

The building of a revolutionary party in the working class required a relentless struggle against the Left Party and its pseudo-left satellites, Schwarz said. These forces supported the wars in Libya and Syria and the fascist backed coup in Kiev. They were "not confused lefts, but right-wingers."

Johannes Stern, member of the WSWS editorial board, spoke on events in Ukraine and the danger of war bound up with them. "We called on workers throughout Europe to make this election a referendum against war," he said.

German Chancellor Merkel, foreign minister Steinmeier and US President Obama were prepared to risk a world war for their geostrategic and economic goals. The crisis in Ukraine was deliberately provoked by them: "The western powers organised a fascist coup and brought a regime to power in Kiev which is dancing to their tune, driving the country to civil war and encouraged the conflict with Russia."

Stern pointed out how the revival of German militarism had been systematically prepared politically. Last autumn, a strategy paper with the title "New Power, New Responsibility: Elements of a German Foreign and Security Policy for a Changing World" was published. "A more appropriate title would be 'the drive to world power 3.0,'" said Stern.

All parties in parliament supported the return of German militarism. This applied not only to the Social Democrats and Greens, but also the Left Party. Stefan Liebich, a leading foreign policy representative of the Left Party, collaborated in the drafting of the strategy paper, and in April, Left Party deputies voted for a foreign intervention by the German army for the first time.

"The ruling elite and their pseudo-left supporters have reached a decision. They want to return to militarism and great power politics, and they are prepared to enforce their criminal policies on the population by any means," Stern concluded. "But the working class cannot and will not allow a third world war. The PSG's joint European election campaign with the SEP in Britain under the slogan 'no more war' was an anticipation of the revolutionary struggle of the European and international working class against war and fascism."

European election candidate Mark Dowson brought greetings from the British Socialist Equality Party. The PSG's sister party stood eight candidates in northwest England. The two large cities of Manchester and Liverpool are in this region, as well as numerous other industrial centres—"or to put it more accurately: former industrial centres," as Dowson said.

In Manchester in 1845, Friederich Engels authored his famous work *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, said

Dowson, and he cited the sentence from it, “Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man’s house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together.”

Then Dowson asked, “What can we say today, 160 years later, about the state of society in Britain?”

He pointed to the social devastation since the global economic crisis in 2008, the decline in wages and living conditions and widespread poverty. “Around 13 million people, 20 percent of the United Kingdom’s population, live below the poverty line.” Hundreds of thousands of mostly young workers are compelled to work in state-run work programmes and with so-called zero-hour contracts. The latter must sit at home and wait to be called to work on demand. The consequences can be seen in the numbers at risk of suicide. Last year alone, 600,000 people phoned an advice line for this reason. The lines were mostly busy.

On the other side, the richest 1,000 Britons have a total wealth of £519 billion (€640 billion), corresponding to a third of British economic output and three times that of Greece.

In conclusion, Dowson said similar conditions existed in “Greece, Spain, Italy, Ireland and even in the economic powerhouse called Germany. What began in the United States with the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers has become an economic epidemic which has affected the entire globe.”

Christoph Vandreier, deputy chairman of the PSG, spoke about the ideological preparation for war. Attempts to rewrite the history of the 20th century had been under way for years. “The aim is to rehabilitate German imperialism.” This applied to Germany’s responsibility in the First World War as well as its unspeakable crimes in the Second World War.

On the hundredth anniversary of World War I’s outbreak in 1914, numerous books have appeared with the thesis that Germany stumbled in to the war without pursuing any imperialist goals.

Thirty years after the historians’ dispute, the media is seeking to rehabilitate Ernst Nolte, whose claim that Hitler’s war of destruction had only been a response to Bolshevik violence still produced strong opposition as late as the 1980s, Vandreier stated.

“At that time in the academic world there was major opposition to this historical lie,” said Vandreier. “Almost thirty years later, German professors are formulating positions that go much further. But there is hardly anyone who stands up against this.”

He named the Berlin-based historian Jörg Baberowski, who was cited by *Der Spiegel* as saying, “Nolte was done an injustice. Historically he was correct.” Baberowski’s book *Scorched Earth*, which relativises the Nazis’ crimes, received the Leipzig book prize and was praised by the Left Party-aligned Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

Vandreier explained the connection between historical revisionism and post-modernist theories. “For post-modernists there is no historical falsification and no lies, but only different truths.”

“Lies were always the basis of war,” Vandreier concluded. “By

contrast, anyone wanting to struggle against the danger of war must have an interest in historical truth, in the scientific understanding of the 20th century.”

In conclusion, Ulrich Rippert, PSG chairman and the party’s lead candidate, explained the significance of the PSG’s election campaign.

“We don’t know how many votes we will get tomorrow,” he said. But this was not the decisive question. The significance of the election campaign is “that we have made clear that there is a party which is resisting the revival of German militarism.”

The PSG had not let itself “be intimidated by the aggressive media campaign or deceived by the Left Party’s lies about humanitarian war aims and military interventions in the name of human rights,” Rippert noted. The party’s strength lay in its historical analysis of capitalism. “Our programme aims to mobilise the strongest social force against war: the international working class.”

The end of military restraint also means “the end of class relations which in the past were based on social partnership, and if to a lesser degree, on social accommodation,” said Rippert. This had been over for a long time. A new period of major class struggles is unavoidable.

He spoke about the growing gulf between the working class and the bourgeois parties, in particular the SPD. “One hundred years after the SPD voted for the First World War, it is imposing a policy of war and massive social attacks as a policy of the state.”

Historical experience had shown that “a revolutionary party does not emerge spontaneously from the class struggle. It must be built in advance.” It has to develop a cadre that can keep the political lessons of past struggles alive and disseminate them. “That is the significance of our party.”

Rippert reviewed the struggle of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International against Stalinism and referred to the work of Leon Trotsky. He rejected the biggest lie of the century: that Stalinism and socialism were the same. Against the Stalinist degeneration, Trotsky unflinchingly defended the principles of Marxism, and above all internationalism.

“If today the German government and the ruling elite think they can impose the return to militarism and war with a few decisions in the Chancellor’s office, a few speeches by the German President and a few propaganda articles in the press, then they are deceiving themselves,” Rippert said. “There is a party that will not be intimidated, which has drawn the lessons from history and is preparing the working class for the coming major class conflicts. That is the International Committee of the Fourth International.”

With these remarks and a very generous collection for the PSG party fund, the election meeting in Berlin came to an end.



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