

# The significance of the PSG's election campaign in Berlin

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The Berlin election result expressed the deep mistrust and growing anger of the population towards the established political parties and their policies of military rearmament and drastic social cuts. The Social Democrats (SPD) and Christian Democrats (CDU), the two governing parties, were essentially thrown out of office.

But now the Left Party and Greens are offering their services to keep the SPD in power, a party that has been in the Berlin state government without interruption since reunification. Under a red-red-green coalition, the capital city of poverty will increasingly become a centre of militarism and preparations for war.

The Left Party and Greens are indistinguishable from the SPD and CDU/CSU (Christian Social Union) on war policy and were fully integrated into the foreign policy shift to a return to militarism and great power politics from the outset. Their specific role consists of employing humanitarian and human rights arguments to justify new wars.

Millions of workers and young people will experience the fact that precisely those policies rejected on election day will be imposed with increased brutality. The resistance to this political cartel will assume new forms. Sharp social and political conflicts are therefore inevitable.

These conditions demonstrate how important the campaign waged by the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, Socialist Equality Party) was and how urgently the working class needs a party that links the fight against war with the struggle against capitalism and fights for a socialist and internationalist programme.

Since the election weekend, global conflicts have deepened further. On the Friday prior to the vote, the Bratislava summit showed how divided the rest of the European Union (EU) is after Brexit. National antagonisms are dramatically intensifying and the Italian banking crisis heralds a new wave of social attacks across

the whole continent.

The development towards war is also rapidly intensifying. Under conditions of the US encirclement of China, the conflicts between the two nuclear-armed powers India and Pakistan are deepening. In Syria, in the wake of a US attack on Syrian army positions and the bombing of an aid convoy in Aleppo, a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia is threatened. Turkey has already announced its intention to further expand its military incursion. It intends to press further into the country so as to permanently occupy areas of Syrian territory.

NATO announced the deployment of 4,000 troops to the Russian border last weekend. The German army (Bundeswehr) is equally involved in this as it is in NATO's rapid response force, which is also directed against Russia. The threat of a third world war is greater than ever before.

The PSG placed the struggle against war at the centre of its election campaign. The campaign was understood from the outset as part of the construction of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) throughout the world. It was based on the statement "Socialism and the Fight Against War" published by the ICFI in February this year. "The same capitalist crisis that produces the insanity of war also generates the impulse for social revolution," the statement declared.

The statement starkly demonstrated that the deep capitalist crisis, which had already produced two world wars in the twentieth century, is once again leading to war and barbarism. The only way to prevent a catastrophe is through the building of an international movement against capitalism. "Imperialism seeks to save the capitalist order through war. The working class seeks to resolve the global crisis through social revolution."

Four principles were subsequently laid out upon which the struggle against war had to be waged: firstly, it has to

be based on the working class; secondly, it has to be anti-capitalist and socialist; thirdly, it must be independent of all organisations of the capitalist class; and fourthly, “The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilising the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.”

This international orientation and principles formed the basis of the PSG’s election campaign. In its election manifesto, the PSG detailed how the German ruling elite is preparing for war and organising a revival of militarism. This development can only be stopped by the mobilisation of the working class. “To intervene independently into political events, workers need their own party,” the manifesto concluded.

The election manifesto was distributed in tens of thousands of copies and formed the basis of many discussions at campaign tables and rallies. In addition, the PSG put up thousands of placards and produced several videos. The central message was always the clarification of political questions and the struggle for the political independence of the working class from all bourgeois organisations, which are moving ever further to the right as the crisis deepens.

The PSG also organised a series of meetings that were attended by representatives of other sections of the ICFI to discuss the most important experiences of the international working class. Most of these meetings were broadcast live online and were directed to workers throughout the world.

Two meetings focused on the danger of a third world war, the increasing tensions between the great powers and the role of German militarism, which is ever more aggressively enforcing its own interests.

Repeated discussions were held on the importance of various pseudo-left groups, which are becoming the most important base of support for pro-war policies. The presidential candidates of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in the US, Jerry White and Niles Niemuth, spoke to a meeting at Humboldt University via video link and discussed the war plans of Clinton and Trump. They made clear that the self-declared socialist Bernie Sanders was playing an important role in mobilising support for Clinton and covering up her pro-war policies.

At the meeting on the class struggle in France, Alex Lantier reported that the “Socialist” government of François Hollande was only able to impose the state of emergency with the support of the Left Front, the sister party of the Left Party, and was using it exclusively against the working class.

The PSG sharply and directly attacked the Left Party and warned of the danger of a red-red-green state government. “The Left Party has turned Berlin into the capital of poverty. In Greece, its sister party, Syriza, has ruined the lives of millions with its brutal austerity programme,” the manifesto stated.

A red-red-green coalition would be a trial run for the federal level. “Such an administration would not represent progress. In 1998, the SPD and Greens formed a coalition, which sent the Bundeswehr on foreign combat missions for the first time since World War Two, and cut wages and benefits. Now this alliance is to be revitalised using the Left Party in order to impose the next round of social cuts and pave the way for further German militarism,” the election manifesto declared.

The election result will be the prelude to a rapid intensification of the political situation. A state government of the SPD, Left Party and Greens will, like any other bourgeois coalition, step up the attacks on the working class and in the process push the political establishment further to the right. This will result in a further strengthening of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Workers will quickly come into conflict with the sharp social attacks of the new government and the preparations for war. Under these conditions, the building of the PSG takes on renewed urgency.

Although the PSG did not yet win mass support in the election, its 2,042 votes were of great significance. This vote total is higher than the PSG has received in the capital in any other previous election. Despite a total media blackout—apart from the obligatory election broadcasts and the small parties’ debate—and the extremely limited resources available to the party, the PSG was able to significantly increase its vote, particularly in a number of working class districts.

But this can only be the beginning. Confronted with dramatic political developments, it is high time to actively participate in the construction of the party. Register today as a supporter, make a generous donation and become a member of the PSG.



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