

German ICFI section adopts new name

Socialist Equality Party (Germany)
28 February 2017

On February 18-19, 2017, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International held a congress that resolved to change the party's name from Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Party for Social Equality) to Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party). The following resolution, which was adopted unanimously by the congress, outlines the reasons for this change.

1. This PSG Congress resolves to rename the *Partei für Soziale Gleichheit* (PSG) to *Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei* (SGP). There are two reasons for this name change. First, the German section is assuming an identical name to that of all the other sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (Socialist Equality Party, Parti de l'égalité socialiste), thereby underlining the unity of the ICFI as the World Party of Socialist Revolution, which fights for the same international perspective throughout the world. Secondly, the term "socialist" in the party name expresses the basic goal of the SGP: the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist society.

2. One hundred years after the October Revolution, mankind is once again facing the alternatives of socialism or barbarism. The world situation resembles that which led to the first successful socialist revolution in history in 1917. Donald Trump's assumption of the US presidency has eliminated any doubt that the crisis of imperialism is once again leading to war and fierce class struggles. Trump's government of billionaires, generals and right-wing ideologues is the most right-wing in the history of the United States. It has declared war on the American working class and on the economic rivals of the US. Its "America First" policy is shattering the political institutions that prevented military conflicts between the imperialist powers and helped suppress the class struggle throughout the post-war period. Trump's perspective of restoring America's national greatness by means of economic nationalism and military expansion recalls the policy of the Nazis in the 1930s, which led to world war.

3. There is no genuine opposition to this catastrophic

course from the bourgeois institutions and parties. In the US, outgoing president Barack Obama and the Democratic Party have done everything they can to facilitate Trump's takeover. The only real differences are whether the vast military apparatus of the US is to be directed primarily against Russia or against China. In Germany and Europe, the ruling class is reacting to Trump's aggressive policies with counter-threats and rearmament. The new German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) demands that one should counter Trump's ultranationalist line by "ruthlessly" defining and defending one's own interests.

4. A quarter of a century after the Stalinist bureaucracy liquidated the Soviet Union and the ideological spokesmen of capitalism proclaimed the "failure of socialism," it has become clear that the relapse into war and dictatorship can only be prevented by overthrowing capitalism and establishing a socialist society. Growing sections of the working class and youth sense that this is the case and are looking for a socialist road out of the prevailing social dead end. This was indicated by the broad popular response to the candidacy of Bernie Sanders, who received 13 million votes in the Democratic Party primaries in the US, as well as by the support for pseudo-left political organizations such as Syriza and Podemos in Europe. All of them received support because they declared themselves socialists and opponents of capitalism. In reality, they are nothing but bourgeois politicians who defend capitalism by whatever means necessary.

5. The International Committee of the Fourth International is today the only political tendency in the world that fights for the mobilization of the working class to overthrow capitalism on the basis of an international socialist program. The ICFI has defended and developed this perspective for decades against reformist, opportunist, revisionist and pseudo-left tendencies. The *World Socialist Web Site* is recognized around the world as the authentic voice of socialism. It provides the international working class with a daily Marxist analysis and a socialist

orientation. Under these circumstances, it would be fundamentally wrong to allow such charlatans and pseudo-leftist connen to exploit the banner of socialism. The name of the party must clearly express its socialist aims and confirm the unity of the International Committee.

6. Twenty years ago, on March 30, 1997, the *Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter* (Socialist Labour League) founded the *Partei für Soziale Gleichheit*. At that time, the International Committee concluded that the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the associated turn to the right of all the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties and trade unions necessitated the transformation of its sections from leagues into parties. While pseudo-Trotskyist and other petty bourgeois organizations reacted to this right-wing turn by the bureaucratic apparatuses by applying for asylum in their ranks, the International Committee took the opposite path. It oriented itself to the working class, and prepared to take the leadership of future revolutionary struggles.

7. The organizational form of the “league” stemmed from a period when reformist parties and trade unions still had the active support of militant workers. At that time, the sections of the International Committee had counted on playing a catalytic role as the most intransigent opponents of Social Democracy and Stalinism in a radicalisation among the most class-conscious and politically active elements within the ranks of these organisations, from which the real possibilities for the establishment of a mass revolutionary party would arise. That was now no longer possible. “We cannot resolve the crisis of working class leadership by ‘demanding’ that others provide that leadership. If there is to be a new party, then we must build it,” declared David North at the time. (See: The Historical Foundations of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit)

8. The BSA chose the name *Partei für Soziale Gleichheit*. The resolution of the founding conference gave the following reasons: “The name ‘social equality’ expresses the fundamental objective of the new party: it is in irreconcilable opposition to the prevailing social tendency, which is characterised by the increasing impoverishment of broad social layers on the one hand, and by the unrestrained enrichment of a small minority on the other. It stands for the goal of the socialist movement: a society in which there are no class differences and which is based on real equality between human beings. And it distinguishes itself from the political crimes, committed by the Stalinists and Social-Democratic bureaucracies, in the name of socialism, which they

theoretically falsified.” (*ibid.*)

9. The identification of socialism with social equality by the International Committee triggered ferocious attacks by the pseudo-left tendencies. The British WRP of Sheila Torrance claimed that equality was an opportunistic, purely bourgeois demand, which sought to reconcile the classes and had always been rejected by Marxists. Twenty years later, it is clear what social orientation motivated such hostility to the demand for social equality. Social inequality has reached unprecedented proportions throughout the world. While the income and wealth of the financial aristocracy and the affluent middle class have multiplied, the working class and poorer layers of the middle class struggle with declining incomes, precarious working conditions and social insecurity. The eight richest individuals in the world possess the same wealth as the poorer half of mankind. During this period, the sections of the International Committee have turned to the working class in the fight for social equality, while the “Lefts,” “Radical Lefts,” “Refounded Communists,” “Anti-capitalists,” “International Socialists,” etc., have all embraced racial, gender and other forms of identity politics in order to defend the privileges of the affluent middle class.

10. There is a profound and irreconcilable political gulf between the International Committee and the pseudo-left organizations. The experience of the Syriza government in Greece and of the Left Party in the Berlin Senate, whose attacks on the working class have exceeded those of the right-wing bourgeois parties, have impacted on the consciousness of the working class. Twenty years after the founding of the PSG, the International Committee is the only political party that is responding to the rise of nationalism by deepening the global collaboration of its sections and fighting for internationalism. It is the only party that fights for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society. This reality must find unmistakable expression in the party’s name.



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