

Socialist Equality Party stands candidates in German election: Against militarism and war! For socialism!

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party of Germany)

5 June 2017

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP—Socialist Equality Party) is participating in the Bundestag (federal parliament) elections to be held on September 24. We are standing a slate of candidates in the states of Berlin and North-Rhine Westphalia as well as constituency candidates in Frankfurt and Leipzig.

At the centre of our election campaign is a socialist programme directed against war and capitalism and expressing the interests of the working class and youth all over the world. The SGP election program provides the basis for the working class to intervene in political developments as an independent force.

The Bundestag election takes place in the midst of the deepest international crisis of capitalist society in history. The danger of a nuclear world war has never been as great as it is today. After 25 years of continual wars in the Middle East, the Balkans and North Africa, the US is preparing a direct military confrontation with the nuclear powers China and Russia. Germany and the other European powers are responding to the growth of geopolitical conflicts by increasing their own military capacity. This heightens the danger of another major war in Europe.

The current federal government coalition between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)/Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) is committed to increasing the military budget from 35 billion euros to at least 60 billion euros by 2024, while further cutting spending on education and other social needs. This is under conditions where a large portion of the population is already struggling to make ends meet. Forty percent of all workers are employed in precarious jobs and 16 percent of the population lives below the poverty level, including 2.5 million children.

All the establishment parties support this political course. None of them has anything to offer but militarism, political oppression and attacks on living standards. From the conservative CDU/CSU to the Left Party, they are implementing social cuts in both the federal and state budgets. They are all conspiring against the population and using the Bundestag election to bring a government to power that will massively increase military spending, cut social provisions and wages and establish the equivalent of a police state.

The SGP is the only party that advocates a socialist programme. All other parties calling themselves “left-wing” have written off the working class. They defend the banks, the big corporations, the Bundeswehr (German armed forces) and the secret services. One hundred and fifty years after the publication of Marx’s *Capital*, capitalism is again showing its true face. Everything the great Marxists wrote about the capitalist system is once again confirmed: It is a system that inevitably leads to social inequality, war and dictatorship.

The crisis of capitalism, however, also creates the conditions for overcoming it. The SGP will use the election campaign to discuss a

revolutionary programme and fight for a socialist perspective in the working class.

At the centre of the SGP’s election campaign are the following demands:

No to war and militarism! Stop Germany’s return to aggressive great power politics!

The epicentre of the war danger lies in the US, which is compensating for its economic decline through trade war and military aggression. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Washington has lost all inhibitions. With Donald Trump, the most right-wing president in US history has moved into the White House. He personifies the brutality and criminality of the country’s ruling class.

German imperialism has reacted by appointing itself the hegemon of Europe. Seven decades after the defeat of the Nazi regime, it is once again striving to achieve its global geo-strategic and economic interests by military means.

As early as 2014, then-German President Joachim Gauck and his successor Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) announced that Germany was “too big and too important” to remain out of the crises and hot-spots of the world. Now the German ruling class is using the UK’s departure from the European Union and the growing conflicts with President Trump to strengthen the German and European military so that it can act independently of the US and, if necessary, against it.

In a Munich beer tent of all places—the backdrop favoured by Hitler—Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that “we Europeans” have to “take our fate back into our own hands” and “fight for our own future.”

Nobody should be confused by her efforts to disguise this call with hollow phrases about the defence of “Western values” and protection of the climate. Dressing up naked imperialist interests with phrases about “values” and “culture” has a long tradition in Germany. In 1914, Berlin justified the World War as a struggle against “Russian barbarism,” and 93 leading cultural and scientific figures published a manifesto directed to all “men of culture” that defended the German army as it pillaged Belgium. Twenty-five years later, Europe was laid waste by German tanks and aircraft.

War and militarism follow an inescapable logic. The real significance of German militarism was expressed openly by the right-wing historian Jörg Baberowski. Speaking of the fight against terrorist organizations, he said, “And if one is not willing to take hostages, burn villages, hang people and spread fear and terror, as the terrorists do, if one is not prepared to do such

things, then one can never win such a conflict and it is better to keep out altogether.”

In the last century, two attempts by German imperialism to subjugate Europe and become a world power ended in catastrophe. Despite the propaganda that a reunited Germany has learned the lessons of the past and stands for “peace” and “stability,” a third German grasp for world power will lead once again to war and mass murder if the working class does not intervene.

The Bundeswehr is already active in 18 foreign conflicts. It has deployed combat troops to the Russian border and been implicated in war crimes in Afghanistan and Syria. Right-wing terrorist networks operate within its ranks and cultivate the traditions of Hitler’s Wehrmacht, with the protection of their superiors.

As Marxists, we base ourselves on an understanding of objective social developments in the struggle against militarism and war. The reason for the danger of a Third World War lies in the insoluble antagonisms of capitalism, which is incapable of overcoming the contradiction between the international character of production and the nation-state system.

There is only one way to stop this dangerous development: the establishment of an international anti-war movement based on the working class and fighting for the overthrow of capitalism.

End poverty and exploitation! For social equality!

The SGP rejects the capitalist system. While a small, super-rich upper class lives in luxury and dominates politics, the vast majority of the population lives in want and is largely excluded from the political decision-making process.

In every country, the ruling class is seeking to defend its wealth and international status by demanding more and more “sacrifices” from the working class. Mass unemployment, poverty and the destruction of living standards are the result. An entire generation of young people is being denied a future. Vast resources are squandered on military spending, while vital infrastructure decays, poverty grows and complex environmental problems are neglected.

Germany is already one of the most socially unequal countries in the world. According to a study by Oxfam, 36 German billionaires possess as much wealth (276 billion euros) as the poorest half of the population. According to the latest report by the Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband, poverty in Germany affected 15.7 percent of the population in 2015, a new record. One in five employees in Germany works for the paltry sum of less than 10 euros per hour.

The SGP fights for a society in which the needs of the many stand higher than the profit interests of big business. The super-rich, the banks and the corporations must be expropriated and placed under the democratic control of the population. Only in this way can the social rights of all be secured. These include the right to an adequately paid job, a first-class education, affordable housing, a secure pension, high quality old-age provisions and access to culture.

Defend democratic rights and the right to asylum! No to increased state powers and surveillance!

The growth of social inequality and the return of militarism are accompanied by a massive growth of state surveillance and the apparatus of oppression. Hardly a month passes without new laws being passed

expanding the police and intelligence services, increasing the monitoring of communications and expanding censorship of the Internet. The so-called “war on terror,” which in reality produces terror, serves as a pretext to intensify attacks on refugees and abolish elementary democratic rights. The heightening of the powers of the state apparatus is aimed at intimidating and suppressing resistance to militarism and other forms of social protest.

The ruling class knows that anger over social inequality and militarism is enormous. It fears the outbreak of open class struggles. According to the recently published study “Generation What?” 86 percent of young people in Germany believe that inequality is growing. Only 1 percent has complete confidence in the existing political set-up, while 71 percent have none. Forty-two percent would participate in an uprising against the powerful if it were to happen in the near future.

The SGP calls for the dissolution of all secret services and the apparatus of surveillance. We defend fundamental democratic rights and the right to asylum and reject any form of nationalism and xenophobia. The attacks on refugees are directed against all workers. That is why a common struggle against capitalism of all those living in Germany is necessary.

Workers need their own party!

Although official politics meets with overwhelming rejection among working people, this opposition finds no political expression within the establishment parties and institutions.

The SPD is rightly hated. Originally established by workers, today it is their stoutest opponent. SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder’s Agenda 2010 and his Hartz welfare and labour “reforms” have plunged millions of working class families into misery. As part of the current grand coalition government, the SPD, together with Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), has imposed devastating austerity measures on Greece. When the SPD today speaks of “reforms,” it does not mean social improvements, but rather social cut-backs, increased state powers and militarism. In the election campaign, the SPD’s leading candidate, Martin Schulz, is attacking Chancellor Merkel from the right. He is aggressively promoting the development of a European defence policy and a European army dominated by Germany.

A similar policy is pursued by the Greens, who have always been a party of the affluent upper-middle class. They are now among the most strident advocates of war and display only arrogance and contempt for the working class. Since the Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer defended the Kosovo War in 1999 with the slogan “Never again Auschwitz,” the former pacifists have supported every German war effort, even when in opposition.

The Left Party is preparing to play a similar role to that played by the Greens 18 years ago. It is seeking a so-called “red-red-green” coalition with the SPD and the Greens and is increasingly becoming an open party of war. Significantly, the party’s lead candidate, Dietmar Bartsch, was among the five Left Party Bundestag deputies who, for the first time, voted in April 2015 to deploy the Bundeswehr abroad. Sahra Wagenknecht, the party’s second lead candidate, told broadcaster ZDF last summer, “Of course, Germany will not leave NATO on the day we join a government.” In other words, the Left Party is just as prepared to support the Bundeswehr’s foreign operations as it is to impose social cuts in the states and municipalities where it exercises political power.

With their right-wing policies, the SPD, the Left Party and the Greens facilitate the growth of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). This right-wing extremist party can pose as an opposition force only because

none of the establishment “left” parties opposes the ruling class with a socialist perspective. The AfD exploits anger and frustration over the anti-social policies of the main parties to push the entire political establishment further to the right. A similar process can be seen with Marine Le Pen in France, Gert Wilders in the Netherlands and Heinz-Christian Strache in Austria.

In order to fight the establishment parties and the extreme right and intervene independently in political events, the working class needs its own party. Exactly 100 years ago, Russian workers demonstrated that it was possible to conquer state power, end the World War and reorganize society according to socialist principles. The later Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union does not detract from the historical significance of the October 1917 Revolution.

For the unity of the international working class! Build the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei!

The prerequisite for preparing the coming class struggles and realizing a socialist perspective is the construction of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party). Our strength is based on the historical tradition we embody and the principles we represent.

We stand in the tradition of the Left Opposition, which, under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, defended Marxism and socialist internationalism against the betrayals of Stalinism. Our revolutionary role models are Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who fought against capitalism even under the most difficult conditions, defending internationalism in the midst of the nationalist frenzy of the First World War.

It is now over 25 years since the former East Germany (German Democratic Republic—DDR) and the Soviet Union were dissolved. This was due to the role of Stalinism, which politically suppressed the working class and created enormous confusion about the real nature of socialism. The Stalinist bureaucracy itself took the initiative for reintroducing capitalism, with devastating social and political consequences. The Left Party stands in this Stalinist tradition.

The SGP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) are today the only organizations worldwide fighting for a socialist response to the global crisis of capitalism.

We reject all imperialist alliances and military blocs. We are for the dissolution of NATO and the European Union and fight instead for the United Socialist States of Europe. Our ally in the struggle against German militarism is the European, American and international working class.

We call on all those who are not willing to accept the return of German militarism, the increase in poverty and the rise of the right wing to support the SGP and its election campaign. Support our participation in the election with your signature to ensure we get on the ballot. Share and discuss this election statement with friends, colleagues and acquaintances. Organize election meetings in your region, donate to our election fund and vote for the SGP on September 24. Every vote for the SGP is a vote against war and capitalism.

Read and study the *World Socialist Web Site*, the daily Internet publication of the ICFI! Become a member of SGP! It is high time to actively participate in the construction of a new mass socialist party!

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