

SGP election rally: International meeting in Berlin calls for stepped-up struggle against capitalism and war

Our reporters
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On Saturday the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, Socialist Equality Party) ended its election campaign with an international assembly against capitalism and war. Around one hundred members and supporters of the party attended the meeting in the Kalkscheune in the center of Berlin to hear speakers from the US, Great Britain and France and discuss the socialist perspective for the struggle against fascism and war.

The speakers on the podium addressed in detail the international crisis of capitalism, the imminent threat of nuclear world war and the moves towards strengthening the state apparatus all over the world. They made clear that the turn to the right by all parties and the growing influence of the far right can only be stopped by a socialist movement of the working class.

Peter Schwarz, chairman of the German editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, opened the meeting with an assessment of the election campaign. Twenty-five years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the current election campaign took place under conditions of deep crisis of the capitalist system. It was not only the American ruling class which reacted by re-armament and police-state measures—the German ruling class is pursuing a similar course.

In this respect there was unanimity amongst the parties, reaching from the far right Alternative for Germany (AfD), to the Left Party. “The SGP is the only party that consistently opposed this madness and put the struggle against militarism and war at the heart of its election campaign,” Schwarz said.

The SGP stands in the tradition of the October Revolution and the irreconcilable struggle for the political independence of the working class. It was

therefore irreconcilably opposed to all the pseudo-left groups, which cover up the right-wing politics of the Left Party and called for a vote for the party. “Our campaign is designed to build a revolutionary party that unites workers around the world in the struggle against nationalism, social inequality and war,” Schwarz said.

The national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in the United States, Joseph Kishore, also stressed the importance of the struggle against the pseudo-left. Bernie Sanders had received a great deal of support after declaring himself a socialist and stating his opposition to extreme levels of social inequality. He then quickly ended up supporting Hillary Clinton, defending the Democratic Party, and suppressing social opposition. This paved the way for Trump’s path to power.

Kishore addressed the fascist type character of the Trump government. In his speech to the United Nations, Trump announced the “total destruction” of North Korea without meeting with any significant opposition within the political establishment. “The extent of the naked criminality and gangsterism in the US government is only comparable to Nazi Germany in the 1930s,” Kishore said.

Trump did not come out of the blue. “Ultimately, the US government is an expression of the protracted collapse of American and international capitalism,” Kishore said. Social inequality had assumed horrendous forms.

The secretary of the Parti de l’égalité socialiste (PES), the French section of the International Committee, Alex Lantier, argued that the same processes of militarism and social polarization were also at work in Europe. France and Germany are increasingly taking a stand

against the US. “In the process European capitalism is not some sort of more civilised cousin of American imperialism but rather its ruthless and arrogant rival.”

With his reform of the labor market in France, the government of Emmanuel Macron was undertaking a sweeping attack on the social rights of the workers gained in the course of the 20th century. Macron’s offensive was the herald of further social attacks across the continent. Opposition to these measures could not be left in the hands of the unions or the so-called Left Front. This was demonstrated not least by the experience in Greece, where Syriza imposed the austerity diktats of the EU in collaboration with the trade unions.

Chris Marsden, national secretary of the SEP in Great Britain, described the role played by the European Union in the devastation of Greece. “The EU has long since abandoned its former social-democratic and liberal claims and increasingly manifests itself as an instrument of social counterrevolution,” he said.

Brexit had shown that Europe could not be united under capitalism. The SEP in Britain, like the SGP in Germany, rejected all forms of nationalist opposition to the EU and fought for the United Socialist States of Europe.

Christoph Vandreier, deputy chairman of SGP, concluded the meeting. He dealt at length with the lurch to the right in official politics and the rise to prominence of the AfD. The hypocrisy of the Bundestag parties in their criticisms of the AfD was repulsive, Vandreier continued: “In fact, the Christian Democratic Union, the Social Democratic Party, the Greens and the Left Party do not fundamentally differ from the AfD. They criticise the AfD on Sunday and then put AfD’s policies into practice on Monday in the Bundestag and in state parliaments.”

All of the parties were implicated in the mass deportation of refugees to war zones; they all demanded the strengthening of the state apparatus and backed the return of German militarism. The most obvious expression of the turn to the right, however, was the campaign to play down the war crimes of the Nazis. Vandreier described in detail how representatives from all of the parties had lined up behind the right-wing extremist, Humboldt professor Jörg Baberowski, after the latter claimed that Hitler was not cruel and defended the Nazi apologist, Ernst Nolte.

When the SGP and its youth organisation, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), held meetings opposing this falsification of history, they were subjected to massive attacks in the media. The *FAZ* newspaper called for the censoring of the *World Socialist Web Site*, and just a short time later Google began censoring searches for the WSWS, in particular the numerous articles and polemics on the site dealing with Baberowski.

“The ruling class fears the truth will come out. The truth is that the capitalist system is once again opening the portals for fascism and war. Either the working class overthrows capitalism and builds a socialist society, or the bourgeoisie will once again plunge humanity into catastrophe,” Vandreier said. The SGP was the only party to articulate this truth and fight for a socialist program.

The speeches were followed by a lively discussion, which in many cases continued late into the night.



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