

Parti de l'égalité socialiste holds meeting in Paris against militarism and austerity

Our reporters
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On Sunday, the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), held a meeting in Paris titled “No to the Merkel-Macron axis! For a socialist struggle of the European working class!” It exposed the militaristic plans underlying the attempt to form a Grand Coalition government in Germany under Chancellor Angela Merkel, which would work closely with President Emmanuel Macron in Paris.

Several dozen people attended the meeting, including readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) and a layer of immigrant youth concerned about Macron's increasingly brutal and anti-democratic policies. The main speaker was Johannes Stern, a leading member of the *Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei* (SGP), the ICFI's German section.

Stern reviewed the SGP's comprehensive analysis of the coalition pact drafted by the Christian-Democratic (CDU/CSU) and Social-Democratic (SPD) parties. The Grand Coalition, he noted, would be the most right-wing German regime since the fall of the Nazis. Quoting from the pact, Stern exposed Berlin's plans for mass detention, adopting the far-right Alternative for Germany's (AfD) anti-refugee policy, broadly building up state surveillance and police state measures, and building an “army of Europeans.”

These plans involve doubling German military spending and exerting military influence across a vast area of the world's surface where Germany has economic interests—including the Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and Russia, as well as Asia, Africa and Latin America. He pointed to the rising danger of major wars, which are increasingly discussed in the media as all the great powers rearm, as well as support for the war drive from the entire German political establishment, including the Left Party.

Stern explained the central points of the SGP's

campaign calling for new elections and opposition to the Grand Coalition. The SGP is demanding the publication of the secret agreements underlying the Grand Coalition pact, including between Germany and France on the use of France's nuclear arsenal, and calling on SPD members to vote to reject the pact and the attempt to form a Grand Coalition government. Above all, this perspective is based on the mobilization of workers across Europe and internationally on the basis of a socialist program of struggle against capitalism and war.

Alexandre Lantier, a leading member of the PES, spoke after Stern on the close collaboration between Merkel and Macron on this militarist agenda. Pointing to the Macron government's €300 billion military spending program for 2018-2024 and its attacks on immigrant rights, bringing it ever closer to the far-right forces, he stressed that Macron's historic austerity measures and attacks on the working class are designed to fund France's military machine. The only way to oppose these attacks is to fight militarism and the international drive to war.

He added that this vindicates the call of the PES for an active boycott of the second round of the French presidential elections last year, between Macron and neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen. The right-wing, militarist megalomania underlying plans for a Berlin-Paris axis shows that Macron is not a lesser evil than Le Pen, as a number of pseudo-left parties indicated by refusing to oppose Macron in the run-off. These parties support Macron's militarism and his plans to draft youth into wars in Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

Lantier played videos of a recent press conference by leading members of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France (LFI) calling for increased military spending, supporting Macron's call for the draft and demanding that it be lengthened, and calling for a nuclear deterrence policy aimed at the rest of the world. Lantier stressed the class gulf separating pro-imperialist middle class parties

like LFI, which emerged from the post-1968 student movement, from the ICFI's struggle for Trotskyism and a revolutionary orientation to the international working class.

The remarks were followed by a lively question and answer session and discussion. There were many questions about what is behind the drive to war, discussions of German remilitarization, the spread of European military bases and deployments worldwide, including in India, and close ties between Macron and politicians like Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who rules in coalition with the far right.

Pierre, who had read the WSWs for several years before coming to his first PES meeting on Sunday, said the quality and objectivity of the ICFI's writing distinguishes it from other news sites and political organizations active in France.

High school students were concerned about the growing danger of war and asked what could be done to avoid being drafted to fight in wars they oppose in the Middle East, Africa or beyond.

“Maybe in five years we might be forced to fight wars against another country. War is rotten, you can die. Many people can die because of that,” one high school student said.

“The meeting was good,” her friend said. “You talked about essential problems like the fact there could be the draft soon. On television, they don't tell us everything. They don't tell us that there are plans for war.”

Members of the PES explained that there is broad opposition to war and police state measures in the population in every country in Europe, but that it must be mobilized, unified and given a revolutionary perspective. The discussion progressed to the need to build branches of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the ICFI's youth movement, and attendees proposed that PES meetings should be organized in other cities across France.



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