

A socialist perspective against the return of fascism in Europe

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On Saturday, May 4, the International Committee of the Fourth International held the 2019 International May Day Online Rally, the sixth annual online May Day Rally held by the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement. The rally heard speeches on different aspects of the world crisis of capitalism and the struggles of the international working class from 12 leading members of the world party and its sections and sympathizing organizations around the world.

On successive days, the World Socialist Web Site is publishing the texts of the speeches delivered at the rally. Below is the speech delivered by Christoph Vandreier, the deputy national secretary of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party of Germany). On Monday, the WSWS published the opening report to the rally, given by David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of the WSWS and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US).

On behalf of the German section of the ICFI, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP), I would like to bring revolutionary greetings to this rally.

This May Day takes place under extraordinary conditions. While the ruling class is promoting authoritarian and even fascist forces, the working class is being radicalized and entering into struggle.

If one were to base oneself on the official press, it would appear that the whole of society is moving sharply to the right.

In the European Union, 10 countries are already governed by extreme right-wing parties. The right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic prime minister of Hungary, Victor Orban, recently met with Italy's fascist interior minister Matteo Salvini to announce a new right-wing alliance throughout the continent.

In Austria, the far-right FPÖ just distributed a party leaflet on Adolf Hitler's birthday in the city where he was born, Braunau, attacking the integration of refugees and calling them "rats." This has had no impact upon its coalition with the conservative ÖVP.

But the shift to the right is not limited to governments that include openly fascist parties. In France, Emanuel Macron hailed the fascist dictator Philippe Pétain and has mobilized the army against peaceful demonstrators opposing growing social inequality.

In Germany, the grand coalition of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) is carrying out the program of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). It is building up a network of deportation camps for refugees all over the country. It is rapidly rearming the German military and building up a police state.

The secret service is closely collaborating with the far-right AfD and is surveiling and attacking everyone who seriously criticizes the far-right party. For the first time, the German SGP has been placed on a list of left-wing extremist organizations because it criticized capitalism, nationalism and the AfD.

There is no question about it: The ruling elite is shifting rapidly to the right and capitalism is leading once again to fascism and war. But the broad masses of the working population are deeply hostile toward this development. In Berlin alone, hundreds of thousands of workers have demonstrated against the AfD.

They have not forgotten the experiences of the 1930s and 40s, when the bourgeoisie consciously brought Hitler to power to smash all opposition to social inequality and war. Workers remember the consequences of this conspiracy. Today, it is impossible to walk through the German capital without coming across memorials and historical traces of

annihilation. And there is not a family that was not deeply affected by these horrific events.

In opposition to the ruling elite, the working class is moving to the left. There are mass strikes in Eastern Europe, protests against the social attacks of the Syriza government in Greece, and the movement of the yellow vests in France. And this is only the beginning. In Germany, a movement is growing against rising rents in which the demand for the expropriation of the landlords is on everyone's mind.

The chasm between the ruling class and the population has become unbridgeable. That is why the ruling class is heading once again towards authoritarian and even fascistic methods. They now want to silence everybody who is even mentioning the word socialism.

Last week, the leader of the youth organization of the social democratic SPD, Kevin Kühnert, stated in an interview that he is in favor of socialism and explained that socialism is, in his view, a set of mild reformist proposals that would "restore the promises of the social state of the 70s and 80s."

But even these tepid demands unleashed an uproar in the trade unions, the government, the SPD itself and virtually every newspaper in the country. Kühnert was compared to Stalin and attacked for his "Marxist ideology." The AfD called upon the secret service to go after the SPD politician.

The ruling elite no longer accepts even distorted forms of social criticism, because its rule, the perverse enrichment at the very top of society and the drive towards imperialist war have become incompatible with the social needs of the masses.

This development confirms the SGP's fight against the return of fascism in Germany, which is summarized and developed in the book *Why are they back?* We exposed the attempts to falsify the history of the Third Reich, which are aimed at reviving all of its methods. And we showed that there is no opposition to this within the ruling elite.

After Professor Jörg Baberowski from Humboldt University in Berlin said, in February 2014 in Germany's biggest news journal, *D er Spiegel*, that Hitler was not vicious and that the Holocaust was not different from mass shootings during the civil war in Russia, not a single faculty member of any university in Germany criticized his horrific statements.

Quite the opposite. Representatives of all the

parliamentary parties in Germany, including the Left Party, most of the corporate media and a significant number of academics defended Baberowski when the SGP and the IYSSE criticized his trivialization of the Nazis' crimes.

On the other hand, the SGP won widespread support from students and especially among workers. Baberowski and company may be able to rewrite history in their rotten academic circles, but they cannot erase the memory of Nazi crimes in the population. They will not conquer again.

And this is not just the case in Germany. When I presented the book *Why are they back?* in London and in six meetings across the United States in recent weeks, hundreds of workers and students attended, because they understood that they are confronted with exactly the same issues.

They responded very positively to the perspective of the independent mobilization of the working class, the only social force that can stop the rise of fascism. And the meetings themselves made very clear that it is not the German working class that alone will beat the rise of fascism, and not the American working class that alone will do so, but the international working class.

But in order to do so, the working class requires a socialist perspective and revolutionary leadership. This is the main lesson of the 1930s and of Trotsky's fight against the betrayal of the Social Democrats and the Stalinists, who played down the threat of fascism and refused to fight it.

The central task is to build the International Committee of the Fourth International throughout Europe and internationally. That is the only way to stop the fascists, and this is the perspective we are fighting for in the European elections.



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