

Socialist Equality Party (Germany) holds meeting on anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall

Our correspondents
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On the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) held a meeting in Berlin-Schöneberg City Hall attended by dozens of workers and young people. The speakers discussed both the significance of the collapse of the Stalinist regime 30 years ago and the deep crisis of capitalism that has developed since that time.

David North, chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in the US and editor-in-chief of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS), made clear at the outset that the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had never been a socialist regime. “It was not the result of a genuine workers’ uprising and socialist revolution,” North said. “Rather, the GDR was the result of the suppression of any revolutionary potential that existed throughout Germany after the collapse of the Third Reich.” Stalin feared a socialist revolution in Germany because it also would have fuelled an anti-bureaucratic revolution in the Soviet Union.

“The regime established in East Germany under the eyes of Soviet troops was led by old Stalinist lackeys of the same KPD [Communist Party] that had enabled Hitler to come to power at all,” North continued. “People like [Walter] Ulbricht had survived their years in Moscow, where they had fled after Hitler’s victory, only because they had denounced their comrades and betrayed them to the executioners of Stalin’s GPU [secret police].”

The founding of the GDR was not about the realization of socialism, but about the stabilization of capitalism in the West. “To establish socialism in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the other countries of Eastern Europe, the working class would

have had to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracies and transfer political power to truly democratic organs of workers’ power. That was what the Trotskyist movement insisted on,” North said.

Among other things, because the Stalinist regime brutally suppressed the Trotskyist movement, it was not possible to realize this revolutionary perspective in the GDR, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In 1989, while the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter (BSA), the forerunner of the SGP, intervened vigorously in the demonstrations, it was unable to spontaneously compensate for the lack of a revolutionary cadre and steer the movement in a socialist direction overnight.

“Nevertheless, our party is not in despair. Ultimately, the collapse of the GDR revealed the historic bankruptcy of Stalinism, not socialism,” North continued. “We were absolutely confident that there would inevitably be a new movement for socialism; that the many promises about the glorious future that the reintroduction of capitalism would bring would be exposed; that the contradictions of the capitalist system would intensify and lead to a new wave of revolutionary struggles.”

Looking back over the past 30 years, one can see how correct this assessment had been, North stressed. Capitalism was once again showing its true face. In social terms, it is dominated by unprecedented inequality, in foreign policy by a new imperialist colonial policy, in philosophical terms by extreme irrationalism and in political terms by the revival of fascism. This is not only the case in Germany, but all over the world, North said.

He then went into detail about the ideological preparation for dictatorship and militarism. A key event

in this respect was the publication of the article “World War I Guilt: Culpability Question Divides Historians Today” in the February 2014 edition of the newsweekly *Der Spiegel*. The author, Dirk Kurbjuweit, argues in favour of a re-evaluation of the German past and allows Ernst Nolte to speak out, who, among others, triggered the historians’ dispute (*Historikestreit*) in 1986, when he claimed that the Holocaust was an understandable reaction to the violence of the Bolsheviks.

Kurbjuweit then quotes Professor Jörg Baberowski of Humboldt University, saying: “Nolte was done an injustice. Historically speaking, he was right.” As justification Baberowski added, “Hitler was no psychopath, and he wasn’t vicious. He didn’t want people to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table.”

North dissected these statements in detail and came to the conclusion that the historical facts were being falsified here in order to justify, or at least trivialize, the crimes of the Nazis. Thirty years after German reunification, all the filth of the past was coming back.

The chairman of the SGP, Ulrich Rippert, then went into this question. He pointed to the social counterrevolution that had taken place on the territory of the former GDR. “The Treuhandanstalt [GDR agency for privatization] disposed of a total of 14,000 state-owned enterprises. Seventy-one percent of all employees in the former GDR lost their jobs, many now live on low-wage jobs or are dependent on welfare.”

German militarism is now returning with force. Only days before the celebrations for the 30th anniversary, the president of the Bundestag (federal parliament), Wolfgang Schäuble, had spoken of the “catastrophe of 1945” and raved against the pacifist attitudes of the Germans, Rippert said. The fact that he described the end of the war—and not the Nazis’ assumption of power or the beginning of the world war—as a catastrophe showed the character of his demand that Germany should again wage international war. Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer had made similar remarks.

Rippert explained, “According to the accusations of the Nuremberg war trials, what Schäuble, Kramp-Karrenbauer and the entire ruling class again publicly proclaim is a criminal offence. The Nuremberg charge was of committing crimes against peace and

participation in the planning, preparation, unleashing and conduct of wars of aggression.” While resistance to militarism among the population was enormous based on historical experience, the entire political establishment was moving in this direction.

In 1989, the BSA had already demonstrated its ability to formulate an independent perspective for the working class. This was possible because the party relied on the historical achievements of the Fourth International and worked closely with its international sister parties.

Today the SGP is the only party that seriously opposes social inequality, war and the rise of the extreme right. If fierce class struggles are now breaking out around the world—as in Chile, Iraq and Hong Kong—everything depends on building this party as the revolutionary leadership of the working class, Rippert concluded.

After the lectures, lively discussions continued at the book table. Many participants left their contact details in order to become active and participate in building the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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