

Socialist Equality Party launches campaign for 2021 German federal election

“Workers need their own party!”

Our reporter
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The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) began its campaign for the 2021 German federal elections in September with a strong launch meeting Sunday, which was followed by hundreds of workers and young people online. SGP candidates and several international guest speakers outlined the extent of the capitalist crisis and presented a socialist answer.

The nine speeches made clear that the ruling elite has declared war on the working class around the world. They have sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives to protect their profits, are preparing for large-scale warfare, and are resorting to authoritarian and ultimately fascist methods to impose their policies.

The speakers counterposed the programme of socialist revolution to these reactionary developments. The SGP is conducting the campaign to give the growing resistance a voice and a perspective. Workers must unite internationally in a struggle against mass layoffs, mass infection and war, and build the International Committee of the Fourth International, of which the SGP is the German section.

SGP chairman Ulrich Rippert opened the online meeting. He explained the significance of the SGP’s election campaign in a society that is at war with itself. “For millions of people, the day begins with news of the new figures of infections and deaths,” Rippert began. “As in war, the dead and injured are listed and the questions of whether there is sufficient space in the crematoriums and enough intensive care beds are posed.”

The coronavirus runs “through the middle of society.” On the one side, millions of workers are forced to work under unsafe conditions, and “the self-employed, artists, cultural professionals and small business owners face social ruin.” Schools and childcare facilities are being reopened. On the other side, the major banks and corporations, shareholders, investors and speculators are receiving gigantic sums of money. “The stock markets are celebrating record profits, while the coffins pile high and hundreds of thousands lose

their jobs and their income,” said the SGP chairman said.

More than 2 million dead worldwide during the first year of the pandemic, 800,000 in Europe, 70,000 in Germany—these are the victims of a policy that sacrifices the health and lives of workers for the profits of the corporations and banks.

In their speeches, the candidates focused in detail on aspects of the SGP’s programme. Marianne Arens spoke on the deadly consequences of the coronavirus policies adopted by the federal and state governments, and Dietmar Gaisenkersting related developments in industrial workplaces and the struggle to establish rank-and-file action committees so that workers can organise independently of the trade unions and works councils. Gregor Kahl spoke, as a student and member of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth movement of the SGP, on the necessary basis for a struggle against war, fascism and environmental destruction.

Rippert explained that the SGP was the only party to resist the criminal coronavirus policies from the outset. The Social Democrats (SPD), Greens, Left Party and trade unions are the forces responsible for social spending cuts, militarism and the reopening of schools and the economy, he said. To orient and coordinate the growing opposition to this, “workers need their own party.” This party is the SGP, Rippert stressed.

Its strength is that “it is part of the world party of the Fourth International, which defended the Marxist programme of world socialist revolution against both the Stalinists and Social Democracy.” The long-serving SGP chairman recalled in this historical context “the 50th anniversary of the founding of our party” this coming September—in the building of which Rippert, as a founding member, has played a major role.

The SGP’s election campaign “is not restricted to Germany, but appeals to workers throughout Europe and the world,” Rippert said in conclusion. This international

orientation was expressed in the subsequent contributions by members of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The national secretaries of the Socialist Equality parties—in the US, Joseph Kishore; in Britain, Chris Marsden; in France, the leader of the Party de l'Égalité Socialiste (PES), Alex Lantier; and in Turkey, Ula? Ate?çi of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group)—spoke about the developments and experiences made by workers in their countries and the common political tasks.

Kishore spoke from the country with the largest number of coronavirus deaths. “The pandemic has a natural origin,” he said. “But its consequences—more than half a million deaths in the United States—were determined by the capitalist system.” The ruling class consciously chose to adopt no measures that would have reduced the wealth of the oligarchy and threatened the financial markets to contain the pandemic and save lives.

He explained how both the Republicans and Democrats represent the interests of Wall Street and identified the real issues behind the attempted coup of January 6, when a right-wing extremist mob incited by Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol building. He detailed how the Democrats responded to this and that the Biden administration’s priority is to intensify the conflicts with Russia and China. “In this way, they seek to redirect the social anger in the US against an ‘external enemy.’”

Marsden recalled that the British working class has paid a terrible price for the Conservative Johnson government’s policy of “herd immunity.” The UK, with 126,000 deaths, has the highest number of deaths in Europe. Marsden pointed to shocking indices of social conditions for working class families in Britain and the spread of the coronavirus, especially among students.

Lantier reported that in France, President Emmanuel Macron, in opposition to the demands of the overwhelming majority, is refusing to impose another lockdown. The PES leader noted how the “president of the rich” was cracking down on mounting opposition in the working class and preparing new authoritarian and racist laws. He is receiving support in this from pseudo-left parties such as the Stalinist Communist Party and Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Unsubmissive France.

In a report on the effort of the Erdogan regime to suppress an ongoing uprising in Turkey by authoritarian means, Ate?çi underscored that the threat from the right in Germany represents a serious danger to all workers. but it is clear that “the only party that immigrant workers can trust and should orient to is the SGP, which fights for the unification of the working class on the basis of a socialist programme.”

Christoph Vandreier, deputy chairman of the SGP and lead

candidate for the federal election, summarised the contributions and addressed specifically the threat posed by fascism, which several speakers had mentioned. “In Germany, in the country of the greatest crimes against humanity in history, this is particularly far advanced,” said Vandreier.

He explained how the right-wing extremist networks in the army, intelligence agencies and police “reach all the way into parliament through the AfD (Alternative for Germany),” which has been embraced by all parties from the Left Party to the Christian Democrats and integrated into parliamentary work. Vandreier detailed the far-right cliques at the universities, which were founded by right-wing extremist professors like Jörg Baberowski and are being defended by all establishment parties and most of the major media outlets.

As in the 1930s, so today it is once again the Trotskyists who are warning that the capitalist crisis leads to fascism and war. Despite the differences between today and the 1930s, the threat of dictatorship is very real if the working class fails to intervene independently into political affairs. “Without a socialist revolution, without the building of the Fourth International, a relapse into barbarism is unavoidable,” stated Vandreier.

The resistance to the policy of death, social inequality and the drive to war is enormous, stressed Vandreier. The key is to unify these struggles internationally with a socialist programme.

The building of the SGP as a new revolutionary leadership in the working class is therefore decisive. “To the EU [European Union] of the corporations and banks, the growing danger of war, and the squabbles between the imperialist powers, we counterpose the unification of the continent from below in a struggle for the United Socialist States of Europe,” Vandreier said. The meeting concluded with a powerful appeal to strongly support the SGP’s election campaign and to provide signatures to allow the SGP to appear on the ballot.



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