

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei gains ballot status in North Rhine-Westphalia and Berlin for Germany's general election

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party of Germany)
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State election committees in Berlin and North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) have approved the participation of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP) in these states for September's federal elections. In Berlin, SGP participation was also approved for the state legislature, which is held in parallel with the federal election. This means that just over 15 million eligible voters, a quarter of the 60 million nationwide, can vote for the SGP on 26 September.

The SGP's election campaign is of great political significance. Capitalist society is in the deepest international crisis since the barbarism of World War II. Over 200 million people worldwide have contracted the coronavirus and over 4.3 million have died from it because the ruling class is unwilling to subordinate its profits to the preservation of life. And these are just the official figures. The real ones are many times higher.

Workers everywhere are beginning to fight against the criminal herd immunity policies, against mass layoffs and factory closures, and against the enormous growth of social inequality. The ruling parties are responding by moving closer together, strengthening fascist forces, and preparing new wars.

Germany's next federal government will continue and intensify the right-wing policies of the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union) and Social Democrats (Social Democratic Party) in all areas—regardless of which parties end up forming the government and who becomes chancellor.

At the state level, all the establishment parties—from the CDU/CSU and Free Democrats (FDP) to the SPD, Left Party and Greens—are already forming coalitions with each other and putting the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) programme into practice. They are

organising the mass deportation of refugees, increasing the powers of the police and secret services, fuelling nationalism and pursuing a murderous “profits before lives” policy in the pandemic, which has already cost the lives of more than 92,000 people in Germany.

The SGP is the only party that opposes this right-wing conspiracy with a socialist programme. We do not seek lucrative posts and careers. The aim of our election campaign is to build a party through which the working class—i.e., the vast majority of the population—can independently intervene in the political process. All historical experience shows that the working class needs its own party to fight for its interests.

As the German section of the Fourth International, we draw on a powerful historical tradition: on the Marxist SPD under August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht; on the communist movement under Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; on the Left Opposition to Stalinism; and on the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938, as well as on the struggle of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which has defended and developed Marxism since its foundation in 1953.

We are using the election campaign to publicise our programme widely and unite workers across all borders in the struggle against social inequality, fascism and war.

We have managed to obtain ballot status in the face of opposition from the establishment parties, which are doing everything they can to ban serious opposition in the elections to their herd immunity policies, growing militarism and glaring social inequality.

While they collect millions from the state treasury as well as from rich donors and are automatically given ballot status, new parties that have no such funds had to submit 500 officially certified signatures per state, despite

the coronavirus pandemic. This is not only undemocratic; it also favours radical right-wing parties that reject the social distancing rules and (for example, at the coronavirus deniers' demonstrations) could easily collect signatures.

The socialist candidates of the SGP, on the other hand, were not prepared to risk the health of their supporters to comply with the undemocratic electoral law. They therefore had to collect the handwritten signatures mainly online. As a result, they were unable to submit the required number of signatures for the state lists in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse and Saxony and were banned from the ballot, although all other formal conditions were fulfilled.

The fact that we were able to submit more than the required signatures in Berlin and NRW despite these obstacles is an important political success that was possible only thanks to the support of hundreds of workers.

Silke A., who is involved in the online group "Schools without the risk of contagion," explained, "I signed for the SGP's election participation because I want a policy that is fair to all people in our country and not just a small percentage, and that puts people first and not profit."

Support also came from members of the Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education as well as the Safe Workplaces Action Committees, which bring together workers who oppose the government's and companies' herd immunity policies and are fighting for comprehensive coronavirus measures and the defence of all jobs.

Although we are not on the ballot in every state, we will be taking our campaign nationwide and internationally, holding rallies in numerous cities across Germany and online events. We call on all readers of the WSWs to support our election campaign, to help spread our programme, to discuss it with colleagues and friends and to become members of the SGP themselves.

At the heart of our programme is a socialist perspective.

"No social problem can be resolved without expropriating the banks and major corporations and placing them under the democratic control of the working class," reads the SGP's election manifesto. "Their profits and wealth must be confiscated, and the trillions given to them over the past year must be returned. The world economy must be reorganised on the basis of a scientific, rational plan."

The recent flood disaster underlines the importance of this programme. It reveals the bankruptcy of capitalism

and the criminal inaction of its political representatives. They walk over corpses to satisfy the profit interests of the filthy rich.

The same can be seen in relation to coronavirus policies, where all parties are pursuing an aggressive policy of reopening the economy. Although the Delta variant is spreading rapidly and is highly dangerous for children, they are opening up schools without any serious safety measures in order to place the parents' labour at the disposal of the corporations. In order not to cut into profits, they are paving the way for the fourth wave and driving up the death toll.

The SGP is calling for comprehensive safety measures in factories and schools to stop the spread of the virus. Instead of spending billions on increasing share prices, on armaments and on war, massive investments must be made in education and health.

Other central points of our programme are the struggle against militarism and fascism and the defence of all jobs and social gains, and the democratic rights of the working class.

"These demands cannot be realised through appeals to the ruling elite, but only through the independent mobilisation of the international working class. The SGP therefore supports all genuine initiatives by workers and calls for the formation of rank-and-file action committees in workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods, which will unite internationally and organise workers' struggles."

These action committees must be independent of the trade unions and their works councils, which have turned into co-managers and the company cops of the corporations and are closely intertwined with the established parties.

The SGP opposes all forms of nationalism and xenophobia, defends the rights of immigrants and refugees and fights for the international unity of the working class. "Workers in every country around the world confront the same problems and can only oppose exploitation, militarism and fascism by uniting," the manifesto reads. It rejects the European Union, a tool of the banks, corporations and militarism, and fights for the United Socialist States of Europe.



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