

SGP holds powerful Berlin election rally against war

Our reporters
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Last Saturday, as part of its campaign for the Berlin state election, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) held its first central rally, which took place outside the town hall of Berlin's Spandau district. Amid the murderous proxy war in Ukraine—which threatens to escalate into a nuclear war between Russia and NATO—the SGP is the only party running in the Berlin House of Representatives elections with a programme against war.

The rally gave a strong political lead, coming as it did just a day following the decision to send German tanks to Ukraine. The SGP had immediately released a statement condemning the arms deliveries, urgently warning of the consequences of this escalation, and outlining an anti-war perspective for the international working class.

In his opening speech, SGP chairman Christoph Vandreier explained, “With the delivery of the Marder fighting vehicles, German tanks are again rolling against Russia and risking a nuclear world war. Infantry fighting vehicles are offensive weapons designed to retake Russian-occupied territory—but retaking Crimea would mean nuclear war!”

Referring to the aggressive statements of leading government politicians, Vandreier continued, “The claim that only a military ‘victory’ by Ukraine and the West can establish peace closely resembles the propaganda of German militarism in the First and Second World Wars. No one should be under any illusions: The ruling class, despite its historical crimes, will not shrink from leading German soldiers to the slaughter again for imperialist wars of conquest.”

In addition to Christoph Vandreier, long-time party chair Ulrich Rippert and executive committee member Gregor Link presented the socialist programme and historical foundations of the SGP and its youth organisation, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in several powerful speeches.

Many passers-by stopped to watch the rally and discuss the building of an international mass movement against war with SGP members.

Three young people, who are not yet able to vote, showed great interest in the SGP's election statement. As one of them posted the statement on his Instagram profile, another remarked, “On the one hand, politicians say they are for peace, but on the other hand, they send large amounts of weapons to Ukraine. This doesn't make sense.”

When SGP members replied that the imperialist NATO powers have waged many wars in the Middle East under the pretext of peace and democracy, the student added, “I'm from Iraq, my family fled the war there. They always spread lies about the wars.”

Sonja attends a secondary school in Spandau and also posted a photo from the SGP rally on her social media channel. “I think a mass movement against the war is good. It's important to educate people,” she said. “My mother is Russian, and we have several refugee children from Ukraine at school. I have donated clothes for Ukrainian children.

“I think the tank deliveries are bad because they cost money that is needed elsewhere. Everything has become more expensive. I think everything is getting more expensive because of the [spending on] armaments. It makes sense what you explained: money is being taken away from schools to put into the military and war for profit.”

Speaking about the Berlin Senate's (state executive) profits-before-lives policy in the pandemic, Sonja said, “Everyone got sick at school, and I heard it was really bad for a lot of people. Many others died from coronavirus. We should be active against it. Even the vaccinations didn't help at some point. Poverty in Berlin is very bad, homelessness is also really high.”

“We talked about Rosa Luxemburg and Karl

Liebknecht in school,” Sonja reported, as she opposed the German elites’ renewed ambition to be a great power: “I never thought the government would want power in Europe again. I think Germany should strive for peace after World War I and World War II, not world power.

“In the other wars, the government didn’t ‘help’ even though they were just as bad as the war now. Germany wants to profit from the war. The government doesn’t care at all that people are dying. You are against it; I think that is very good. There should be more people like you.”

When Sonja heard that the Ministry of the Interior and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as Germany’s domestic intelligence agency is called) had placed the SGP under surveillance, she said, “There are so many parties that are right-wing extremist and are up to bad things. You’re probably only being watched by them because you’re exposing things they want kept secret.”

Another young audience member who came to the rally with a friend said, “The cause of all the problems is the way money is distributed. The money is not where it should be, and it is taken away from where it is needed most. We need more money for social professions.”

“I’m against money being invested in armaments,” said **Rejin**, who is studying to be a teacher of history at Berlin’s Free University and also volunteers with a service helping those seeking to leave prostitution. “Where does the money go and where should it come from? The world situation is becoming more and more unstable.”

“Although I work in retail, I can no longer afford fruit,” Rejin continued. “To save rent and expenses, I live with my parents, who have to manage on Hartz IV [welfare]. If I moved out, my parents would lose their home. There are not enough apartments in Berlin.”

On the policies of the governing parties and the importance of the SGP’s participation in the elections, Rejin said: “My first vote in an election was for the Greens, which was the case for many people. The fact that the Greens are driving this war disappointed me, but I quickly realized that it was not the first time. In the meantime, I see myself as a communist and have also studied Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebkecht.

“I don’t expect the state to be neutral. Recently, I saw how police officers in a train station behaved towards an old woman who was seeking shelter from the cold there. I thought for a long time about who to vote for because I don’t want to vote for the Left Party any more. When I saw your poster, I was happy that I can now vote for someone else.”

Thomas, who works as a driver for the local transportation provider Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe (BVG), had been closely following the contributions of several SGP speakers. He said, “I also think the world is heading for a world war and that Putin was provoked by the West. What you said here at the rally today, I agree with.”

“I’m really afraid of a third world war, but I don’t know how to prevent it,” Thomas continued. “Many colleagues think the way you do. But we little people have nothing to say, and you don’t know who to vote for. I used to vote for the Greens because they opposed war and arms supplies.” Today, he said, the Greens were the leading warmongers.

Referring to the growing wave of strikes in Britain, France, the US, and countless other countries, SGP members then explained that the party advocates building independent rank-and-file action committees to unite and develop resistance to war and attacks on living standards internationally. The cause of the development of war was the deep crisis of capitalism, which could only be solved by a socialist movement of workers against war.

To this Thomas replied: “I have heard about the strikes. I wonder if they can really change anything. You struggle all day and get nothing out of it. In any case, you can’t believe the media any more, and the government is nothing but a puppet of the super-rich. I’m definitely voting for you guys.”

After speaking with SGP members, Thomas took a stack of election flyers to distribute among colleagues.

For more information about the SGP and to join our campaign, visit www.gleichheit.de/



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