

Speech at the SGP anti-war rally in Berlin

Ulrich Rippert: “The strength of our party is the historical tradition it represents.”

Ulrich Rippert
11 February 2023

The following speech was given by Ulrich Rippert, the honorary chairman of the Socialist Equality Party and candidate in the Berlin state elections, at the SGP's rally against the war in Ukraine on February 4 at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin.

Dear friends ,

Today's rally makes one thing very clear: there is a party that consistently opposes the war conspiracy in the political and media establishment. There is a party that does not adapt and that does not allow itself to be intimidated. There is one party that has a clear answer to the danger of a third world war and a nuclear catastrophe: the mobilization of the working class on the basis of an international socialist program. That is our party--the SGP.

The speakers before me have already shown how the German government is using the Ukraine war as an excuse to carry out the largest military rearmament since World War II. Ukraine is being flooded with state-of-the-art weapons--the battle tanks will soon be followed by fighter jets and ground troops. It is no exaggeration to say that the danger of a third world war has never been greater than it is today.

But the counter-movement is also growing. Millions of people around the world are following the war news with great concern and growing outrage. Many people wonder: have those responsible in politics and the media gone mad? Did they forget what it was like here after the Second World War? Many know that World War II ended with nuclear weapons, but World War III begins with nuclear weapons.

Many workers see the direct link between insane military rearmament and inflation, constant social spending cuts, pension cuts, real wage cuts and mass layoffs. Resistance to this is constantly increasing.

In France, strikes and mass protests took place earlier this week against the government's pension cuts, in which millions participated. Railroad workers and workers from transport companies, energy companies, refineries and the

public sector walked off the job. The strikes and demonstrations were bigger and more extensive than two weeks ago and are directed explicitly against the Macron government and its war policy.

In the UK, half a million teachers and transport workers took part in a nationwide strike on Wednesday. For weeks, the nurses have been on strike there. In addition, there have been weeks of strikes by railway workers, dock workers, telecommunications workers and postal service workers. There is a general strike movement against the government, which wants to enforce an anti-strike law.

A mass strike movement is developing in Belgium and Finland. In Israel, hundreds of thousands are demonstrating against Netanyahu's far-right government. In the US--where the corruption of the unions stinks even higher to the sky than here--the socialist Will Lehman challenged the leadership of the auto workers union and received many thousands of votes.

Here in Germany, too, dozens of warning strikes and protest actions are taking place against layoffs, plant closures and wage cuts. In addition, there are the strikes at hospitals and care facilities, transport companies, airline companies and by port workers.

Collective bargaining at the post office and in the public service has begun. During the election campaign, we spoke with workers at the Berliner Stadtreinigung [refuse collection and recycling]. There, the company's management is trying--as everywhere --to achieve real wage reductions, while at the same time the BSR chief executive collected €426,000 in salary and bonuses in the year before last--almost twice as much as in the previous year.

The unrestrained enrichment of the rich is one of the essential drivers of war.

Workers who take up the struggle, however, immediately come into conflict with the trade unions that defend capitalism. The unions are doing everything they can to keep the growing resistance of the workers under control, to

isolate struggles and turn them into individual fruitless protest actions.

The DGB (German Trade Union Federation) has concluded a pact with the government, which it calls Concerted Action. Together with its individual trade unions, the DGB supports the government's war policy.

In order to develop the struggle against war and austerity, it is necessary to break through the straitjacket of the trade unions and develop a broad mobilization of the working class. The working class needs its own party. This is the Socialist Equality Party.

The strength of our party is the historical tradition it represents. Here, in this country, was once the cradle of the socialist movement. Here the ideas of Marx and Engels found great resonance. Here, the speeches and actions of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht inspired and mobilized millions of workers.

And here the struggle of Leon Trotsky--who fought against Stalin and Stalinist terror after Lenin's death--has struck deep roots. It was Trotsky who proved that the working class needs one thing above all else in the fight against fascism and war: a party that has a clear socialist program and pursues an international strategy.

We are in this tradition, we are Trotskyists! And that is very important--especially here in Berlin. A few days ago was the 90th anniversary of Hitler's coming to power. Trotsky demonstrated at the time that Hitler could come to power only because the working class was betrayed by its parties. The SPD on the one hand and the Stalinist KPD on the other suppressed any serious struggle against the Nazis. It was this betrayal by the workers' parties and the trade unions that paved Hitler's way to power.

The consequences are known: 70 million war deaths and the industrial extermination of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust. You can't take a step here in Berlin in some districts without encountering the Stolpersteine (cobblestone-sized memorials) that remind you of the extermination of the Jews. And then you read "Esther Goldstein--17 years--gassed in Auschwitz." And you think: Yes, she could still be alive. Only a very short time has elapsed.

That is why we emphasize: It must not be allowed--and we will not allow--the same ruling class in Germany, which is responsible for the greatest crimes in human history, to rely again on war, to use the Ukraine war for an insane military rearmament and deploy tanks once again against Russia.

We say: Two world wars are enough--never again!

The strength of our party and our confidence come from the fact that we have learned the lessons of history. At election rallies in Marzahn and Hellersdorf--in East Berlin, the former capital of the GDR (East Germany)--many questions of history arose. We have discussed why it is so

important to understand the difference between socialism and Stalinism.

This is the strength of the Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International. We have shown that Stalinism arose not from the Russian Revolution, but against it. And that all socialist leaders were murdered by Stalin. We have fought tirelessly against the lie of the century, which is that socialism equals Stalinism, and the crimes of Stalinism that are used to stir up anti-communist sentiments.

Today, these questions are of the utmost importance. Socialism is not the past, but the future.

If we are elected to the House of Representatives, we will continue the struggle of Karl Liebknecht, who stressed in the First World War: The main enemy is at home! Today also, a third world war can only be prevented by building a new mass socialist party that unites the working class internationally and eliminates the capitalist evils once and for all.

Finally, let me say something I have said in many discussions over the past few days: Many people are outraged and angry. And there are indeed many reasons to get upset about the completely irresponsible warmongering, the military rearmament, the strengthening of the right and the criminal COVID policy.

But that isn't enough. It is not enough to be outraged at the irresponsibility of others and denounce them. It is necessary to understand and assume one's own political responsibility. The future is not decided in the Chancellery and not in the Red City Hall. The future depends on what you do today. It is necessary to take action now!

- Make the last week of the campaign a strong offensive!
- Study our election call and the program of the SGP and become a member of our party!
- Distribute and discuss our election manifesto with friends, colleagues and acquaintances!
- Vote for the SGP on February 12 and make the Berlin election the prelude to a rebellion against the policies of war and austerity!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact