

SGP 2024 Congress Resolution

The fight against war and the tasks of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei

23 May 2024

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, held its party congress April 12-15. We are publishing here the resolution that was unanimously adopted by the delegates. It lays down the political line and defines the tasks of the SGP in the current European election campaign and beyond in this new, intensifying period of war and revolution.

The new party executive elected Christoph Vandreier as chairman and Dietmar Gaisenkersting as deputy chairman of the SGP. Johannes Stern was confirmed by the party executive as the editor-in-chief of the German-language edition of the World Socialist Web Site.

The party congress was a strong international event with major delegations from the UK, France and Turkey and additional greetings from leading IC representatives from Sri Lanka, Australia and the United States. Important greetings were also sent by the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, which has members in Russia, Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

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1. Global capitalism is in the deepest historical crisis. The ruling class knows only one answer to this: war, class war and dictatorship. Eighty years after the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, German tanks are once again rolling against Russia. In Gaza, German imperialism is returning to the methods of genocide.

2. But the same contradictions that lead to world war also create the basis for overcoming capitalism. The revolutionary struggle of the working class develops as an interlinked world movement. The International Committee of the Fourth International and the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei are being built as the conscious political leadership of this objective process. They oppose the capitalist policy of imperialist war, the dismantling of the social and democratic rights of the working class and dictatorship with the class-based strategy of World Socialist Revolution. The entire work of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei is subordinated to this general strategic task. All its political, tactical and practical initiatives are derived from it.

3. We oppose the nationalism of the pseudo-left, all bourgeois parties, including the social democracy, the trade unions and the fascists, with the international unity of the workers. The SGP supports the election campaign of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in the US and sees its own initiatives as part of this international offensive for Trotskyism. The SEP is the only party that mobilises the enormous revolutionary potential of the American working class against the most powerful and brutal imperialist power in the world and fights against both the fascist Donald Trump and the warmonger “Genocide Joe” Biden. The SEP presidential campaign has global significance.

4. The SGP places the fight against war and social devastation at the

centre of its European election campaign and, together with its sister organisations, fights for the unity of the European working class in the struggle for socialism. The European Union has always been a conspiracy of the most powerful corporations and banks against the working class. Now, it is becoming the focal point of militarism, increasing state powers and chauvinism. The NATO war against Russia and the growing conflicts with the US are not welding the imperialist powers of Europe together but are intensifying the historical antagonisms between them.

5. We are irreconcilable opponents of the European Union and oppose the pro-war policy of the ruling class with the United Socialist States of Europe. Ukrainian, Russian, German and all other European workers must unite beyond all ethnic, religious and national boundaries in a common struggle against imperialist war and its root cause, capitalism. This requires building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International throughout Europe.

6. Our aim is to close the gap between the severity of the objective situation and the consciousness of the workers. All historical experience proves that in a revolutionary situation, the question of leadership is decisive. The revolution develops as an objective process; it is the consequence of the incompatibility of the vital interests of broad masses with capitalist property relations and the relations of rule based upon them. But socialist consciousness does not develop spontaneously. It requires the building of a party based on the theoretical teachings of Marxism and on the historical experience of over a century of struggle by the Left Opposition, the Fourth International and the International Committee for the perspective of World Socialist Revolution.

7. The most important tasks of the SGP are the systematic expansion and training of the cadre, the intervention in the class struggle with the aim of strengthening the political independence of the working class and its political consciousness, and the building of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) as a Trotskyist youth movement.

8. The *World Socialist Web Site* stands at the centre of this work. It analyses world events every day from the independent standpoint of the international working class and provides leadership in its struggles. Of particular importance is the constant polemic against the pseudo-left and the development of the Marxist perspective at the highest level. This requires a constant struggle against all forms of bourgeois ideology.

The struggle against war and the return of German militarism

9. Militarism and war increasingly dominate all areas of economic and political life. Capitalism is at a dead end from which the ruling class

knows no way out except by various forms of social murder. “Nuclear war is being ‘normalised’; genocide is being ‘normalised’; pandemics and the deliberate extermination of the sick and elderly are being ‘normalised’; the unimaginable concentration of wealth and social inequality is being ‘normalised’; the suppression of democracy and the resort to authoritarianism and fascism are being ‘normalised,’” the WSWS New Year’s Perspective states.

10. The bankruptcy of capitalism finds its sharpest expression in the growing threat of the nuclear destruction of the planet. The United States has been trying to halt its economic decline for over 30 years with brutal wars and to establish its world hegemony. The debacles experienced in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria are driving Washington to ever greater brutality. NATO provoked the Russian invasion of Ukraine and is escalating the war further and further. In doing so, it is accepting a nuclear confrontation and is even considering the deployment of NATO ground troops and nuclear weapons.

11. The war in Ukraine is part of the global struggle of the imperialist powers for the redivision of the world. They see China as their most important opponent, which they want to eliminate and subjugate as a competitor. The Israeli genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza, which is supported by the US and Germany in preparation for an all-out war in the entire region, especially against Iran, shows the ruthlessness and brutality with which they are proceeding.

12. This is not a passing episode resulting from the wrong policies of one politician or another. The roots of the development of war lie in the deep crisis of the capitalist system. After decades of orgies of enrichment on the stock markets, the impoverishment of broad sections of the population and growing economic conflicts, capitalism is once again plunging into barbarism.

13. Under these conditions, German militarism has also re-emerged on the world stage with all its aggressiveness. When Trotsky analysed the objective driving forces that led to the rise of Hitler in 1932, he described Germany as “the most advanced capitalist system in the conditions of the European impasse.” “As the productive forces of Germany become more and more highly geared, the more dynamic power they gather,” he wrote, “the more they are strangled within the state system of Europe—a system that is akin to the ‘system’ of cages within an impoverished provincial zoo.”

14. Hitler’s attempt to blow up this system of cages by military means and subjugate the whole of Europe to Germany left the continent in ruins and, with the Holocaust and the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, led to the worst crimes in human history. However, the complete military defeat of Germany did not solve any of the problems that had led to the explosion of German militarism and the world war.

15. During the Cold War, German imperialism was forced to accept American hegemony. It rose to become the strongest economic power in Europe and focussed on doing business around the world in the slipstream of the US. Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* paved the way eastwards for German industry and supplied it with cheap raw materials.

16. German reunification in 1991, which was initially opposed by Britain and France, caused the old imperialist antagonisms in Europe and with the US to flare up again. This was initially concealed by the new opportunities for expansion offered by the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China. Germany expanded eastwards and developed its economic relations with China. The countries of the former Eastern Bloc were integrated into NATO and the EU, providing new markets and cheap labour.

17. However, with the election of George W. Bush as US president, and the subsequent wars in the Middle East, the antagonisms once against came to the fore. Germany initially sought to maintain its close business relations with Russia, but this was systematically thwarted by Washington. They came to an almost complete standstill with the

destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines. Not yet in a position to stand up to the US, the German ruling class swung fully in favour of the course of the US war against Russia.

18. The ruling class reacted to the resulting weakening of the German economy by fighting even more aggressively for its long-term strategic goals. In retrospect, it has concluded that Hitler made a mistake in December 1941 when he declared war on the United States while simultaneously waging a war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. This time, it considers it more effective—at least for the time being—to act in alliance with the United States against Russia in order to secure a share of the huge reserves of raw materials.

19. In early 2013, leading representatives of the state and government announced the “end of military restraint.” They had decided to use military force again to secure the supply of raw materials and sales markets for German industry. Since then, this policy has been implemented aggressively. In February 2014, Berlin played a central role in the pro-Western coup in Ukraine. The subsequent Minsk Agreement served to buy time to arm the Ukrainian army and prepare for the war that was provoked in February 2022. Germany is now Ukraine’s second largest arms supplier.

20. The German ruling class is thus seamlessly continuing its old policy of world war. Even in the First World War, one of the war aims was to create a Ukrainian vassal state dominated by Berlin. Hitler continued this policy in the Second World War: the subjugation of Ukraine was a central component of the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. Today, German tanks are once again rolling towards Russia, and the Bundeswehr (armed forces) works closely with the heirs of the Ukrainian Nazi collaborators to enforce the predatory interests of German imperialism.

21. The war in Ukraine is also a battle for raw materials. The country has “large deposits of iron, titanium and lithium, some of which are now controlled by Russia,” according to a strategy paper by the federal foreign trade agency Germany Trade and Invest (GTAI). Under the guise of “reconstruction,” German big business is endeavouring to secure control over Ukraine. The same plans exist for a Russia “after Putin.”

22. The realisation of these insane imperialist goals requires the old barbaric methods. In Gaza, the German ruling class is openly returning to the methods of genocide and a war of extermination. It unreservedly supports the bombing of men, women and children and the starvation of the entire civilian population by the far-right Netanyahu regime. This is not about “protecting Jewish lives,” which would be jeopardised by an all-out war in the region, but about Germany’s imperialist interests. To secure raw materials, markets and geostrategic advantages, the ruling class is once again prepared to commit any crime.

23. This is shown in all its sharpness by the discussions about Germany acquiring nuclear armaments and the constant escalation of the war with the nuclear power Russia. While German imperialism laid Europe in ruins 80 years ago, its calculations now include the nuclear annihilation of the entire planet.

24. A primary goal of the ruling class is to become the “task master” of Europe and to dominate the continent once again. The European Union, which has always been a conspiracy of the most powerful corporations and banks against the working class, serves as an important instrument in this endeavour. It is becoming the focal point of militarism, increasing the powers of the state and chauvinism. But far from being able to peacefully assert German dominance, the growing conflicts with the US also intensify the antagonisms in Europe.

25. The return of German militarism goes hand in hand with the class war against its own working class. Chancellor Scholz’s “new era” and Defence Minister Pistorius’ plan to make Germany “fit for war” again mean the militarisation of the whole of society. It involves the reintroduction of compulsory military service, lessons in war at schools and universities and the introduction of a Veterans’ Day to commemorate

Nazi heroes.

26. In order to finance rearmament, real wages are being decimated and the budgets for health, housing and education are being slashed. Payments for the war in Ukraine totalling €7.4 billion are planned for this year alone, while the war budget will grow to €85.5 billion. The goal of increasing war spending to four percent of GDP, a figure that even Nazi Germany only achieved after two years of heavy rearmament in 1935, has long been envisaged.

27. At the same time, the orgy of enrichment at the top of society continues unabated. Handouts worth billions to the corporations and the rich have increased the total wealth of the five richest Germans by around three-quarters since 2020, from \$89 billion to \$155 billion, adjusted for inflation. At the same time, more than 14 million people in Germany live in poverty, according to the poverty report by the charity organisation Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband.

28. While share prices are constantly rising—Germany’s DAX index of leading shares was above 18,500 points for the first time at the end of March, five times as much as 20 years ago—a jobs massacre is taking place. Hundreds of thousands of jobs, some of them highly skilled, are being destroyed because of the economic crisis exacerbated by the pro-war policies. The devastation is centred on the automotive and supplier industries, where up to 400,000 jobs are at stake. However, the chemical, steel, construction, household appliance and software industries, retail, healthcare and the rail-freight sectors are also affected.

29. With its high interest rate policy in the midst of economic stagnation, the European Central Bank is deliberately driving up unemployment. An army of unemployed is to be used as a crowbar to lower wages and dismantle workers’ remaining rights. In this way, the trillions in fictitious capital accumulated through speculation on the stock exchanges and the property markets are to be recouped from the working class.

30. An important issue in this war against workers is control over automation and the use of modern technologies such as AI (Artificial Intelligence). The modernisation of production can only serve social progress if the workers wrest control from the capitalist oligarchy and take it over themselves.

31. The coronavirus pandemic demonstrates particularly clearly the ruthlessness of the ruling class towards the working class. To keep profits flowing, workers were and are being exposed to a deadly virus that is killing thousands and severely damaging millions in Germany. According to official figures, almost 200,000 people have fallen victim to this policy in Germany so far. The figure was almost 20,000 last year, when the pandemic supposedly ended. The pandemic has caused life expectancy in Germany to fall for the first time in over 50 years. This has hit the working class particularly hard. While life expectancy among men in the higher income brackets had reached 80 years in 2019, it was only 71 years in the lower income brackets. This trend has worsened since then.

32. Climate change, the effects of which threaten large parts of the globe, is an existential threat to the future of humanity. In recent years and months, new temperature records and increasingly extreme weather events have been recorded. Studies also show that the destabilisation of ecosystems due to climate change and unplanned urbanisation increases the likelihood of spillover events and future pandemics.

33. The policy of war and social devastation is being pursued by all parties represented in parliament. When the Bundestag backed the genocide in Gaza, all parliamentary deputies without exception voted in favour—from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to the Left Party, including the BSW split-off headed by Sarah Wagenknecht. All the establishment parties are also subordinating health and climate policy to the murderous drive for profits of the banks and large corporations.

34. The united front of all these parties shows that the madness of war, decline in social provisions and the impending destruction of the planet

cannot be stopped by putting pressure on the government, or the hope that any bourgeois party will change course. Like the fight against war, the fight against the pandemic and climate change requires the building of an international socialist movement of the working class.

35. Even the replacement of US hegemony by a “multipolar” world order cannot prevent a world war. Rather, the endeavour to create such a multipolar world order is one of the ways in which tensions between the imperialist powers are intensifying. The struggle against imperialist war cannot be won by restructuring the nation-state system, only by destroying it.

36. The struggle against war therefore also requires irreconcilable resistance to the reactionary, nationalist and capitalist policies of the Putin regime, which represents the interests of a wing of the Russian oligarchy that emerged from the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist bureaucracy. It reacts to NATO’s escalating war policy with a reactionary mixture of obsequious ingratiation and nuclear threats.

37. As Rosa Luxemburg emphasised on the eve of the First World War, the working class must “draw the conclusion that imperialism, war, the theft of countries, the pillage of nations, the violation of rights and the politics of violence can only be fought by fighting capitalism, by opposing the global political genocide with social revolution.”

38. As early as 2014, the International Committee decided at its June plenum to place “the struggle against war at the centre of its political work” and to make the ICFI “the international centre of revolutionary opposition to the resurgence of imperialist violence and militarism.” Since then, the war efforts of the ruling class have progressed further and further, and the SGP and the ICFI have developed the struggle against militarism and war on a political, theoretical and practical level.

39. The basis for this is formed by the historical perspectives of the International Committee, which are based on the extensive experience of revolutionary struggle in the imperialist epoch. “The ICFI alone represents the continuity of Marxism as it has been defended and developed by the Trotskyist movement since its foundation in 1923 against Stalinism, social democracy, Pabloite revisionism, bourgeois nationalism and petty-bourgeois radicalism of every reactionary variety,” the New Year’s Perspective states.

40. This historical continuity of Marxism forms the basis for raising the class consciousness of the working class and enabling it to bring its practice into alignment with the necessity arising from the objective crisis of world capitalism. The revolutionary development of the working class is not an automatic process, it requires the building and training of a cadre and the intervention of the party in the struggles of the working class and youth.

The rightward turn of the SPD, the Greens, the Left Party and the pseudo-left

41. The revolution is a polemic that has taken up arms, explained Trotsky. The development of Marxism and the turn towards the working class takes place in a constant polemic against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois politics and ideology—above all against the positions of the nominally left-wing bourgeois parties and their pseudo-left appendages. For historical reasons they may call themselves social democratic, Green, left or even socialist, but at their core they are right-wing bourgeois forces representing the interests of the state and the wealthy upper-middle-class layers. They are at the forefront of the militarist offensive and the turn of the ruling class towards fascism and dictatorship.

42. This is the conclusion of a longer process. The globalisation of

production that began in the 1980s not only deprived the Stalinist bureaucracy's programme of "socialism in one country," which responded by restoring capitalism, but also the national reformist programme of social democracy and the trade unions. The latter were transformed from bourgeois workers' organisations, which ensured a limited social equity within the framework of capitalism, into bitter opponents of the working class.

43. As the party of the chancellor, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) plays the central role in implementing the militarist and anti-working-class programme of the coalition government it heads with the Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens. It no longer has anything in common with its Marxist origins and is no longer a bourgeois workers' party, but a right-wing state party that unreservedly enforces the interests of German capital, the military and the state apparatus of oppression against the working class. The last two years under Chancellor Olaf Scholz have been characterised by the NATO war offensive against Russia and the associated massive attacks on social and democratic rights. In terms of refugee policy, the SPD and the other governing parties are implementing the AfD's anti-refugee programme. Chancellor Scholz is in favour of deporting refugees and immigrants "on a grand scale."

44. The Greens, the party of the affluent urban upper middle class, are now the most aggressive warmongers. This reveals the bankruptcy of pacifism, which separates the struggle against war from the struggle for socialism and spreads the illusion that there can be a peaceful capitalism. The Greens were pacifists for as long as this policy was in the interests of the German economy. With the capitalist crisis, they have gone over completely to the camp of militarism. Since the then Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer organised the first German combat mission since the Second World War in Kosovo 20 years ago, they have enthusiastically supported every foreign deployment of the Bundeswehr. Now they are at the forefront of the war offensive against Russia and are demanding—in the words of Economics Minister Habeck—that Germany must prepare for a "land war," i.e., an all-out war against the nuclear power.

45. The Left Party is also fully behind the war course and the associated attacks on social and democratic rights. It supports the NATO war offensive against Russia in Ukraine, Israel's genocide against the Palestinians and implements the policy of social austerity, increasing police-state powers and attacks on refugees and immigrants wherever it (co-)governs. The same applies to the official policy of letting the virus rip in the coronavirus pandemic.

46. For its part, the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), a split-off from the Left Party, advocates extremely nationalist and xenophobic policies. Wagenknecht has declared her willingness to form a government with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and work together with the AfD. Although the BSW criticises the war against Russia, which it regards as an American war, it supports the rearmament of the Bundeswehr in the interests of German imperialism.

47. The anti-working-class character of the Left Party and the BSW is rooted in their social and political orientation as well as in their history. The Left Party has always been a bourgeois force that articulated the interests of the capitalist state and the wealthy sections of the middle class dependent on it. Its predecessor organisation, the SED, did not represent socialism in the former East Germany for 40 years, as it claimed, but rather the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy. To defend its privileges, it oppressed the East German working class. The SED and its immediate successor the PDS played a central role in the dismantling of the nationalised property relations and the associated social attacks in East Germany. The claim that Stalinism equalled socialism, the central lie of the 20th century, disorientated the working class, alienated it from Marxism and disarmed it against the attacks of the capitalists, thus creating the conditions for the resurgence of militarism and fascism.

48. Pseudo-left groups such as Marx21 (formerly the German section of

the International Socialist Tendency), SAV (formerly the German section of the Committee for a Workers International), RIO and their various splinter offshoots, which are active within and around the Left Party, play a particularly reactionary role. They essentially support the policies of their parent party and even provide the leading personnel there—including co-chair Janine Wissler, a long-standing Marx 21 member. Their pseudo-Trotskyist phraseology serves above all to cover for the right-wing policies of the ruling class and to suppress an independent socialist movement of the working class against capitalism, fascism and war.

The struggle against fascism

49. In light of the experiences of world war and the Holocaust, opposition to war and social devastation is enormous and deeply rooted in the consciousness of German workers. The coalition government is the most hated in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. The chancellor's party, the SPD, is polling below 15 percent and the FDP is threatening to fail at the 5 percent hurdle required to enter parliament.

50. The ruling class is reacting not by making concessions to public opinion, but by intensifying its deafening war propaganda and taking dictatorial measures. Across Europe and the world, far-right parties are growing, and governments are resorting to ever more brutal methods of political repression. In this respect, far-right governments, such as those of Meloni in Italy or Milei in Argentina, do not differ significantly from the "democratic" governments of Joe Biden or Olaf Scholz: they all take brutal action against refugees, arm themselves for major wars and suppress freedom of expression.

51. Terrorising refugees and the escalation of war are directly linked. The more aggressively the ruling class pushes ahead with war and social cuts, the more it relies on dictatorship and fascism to suppress the growing social and political opposition. With their agitation against immigrants, establishment politicians and the media are trying to make them the scapegoat for the social crisis and strengthen the extreme right. The attacks on refugees are the spearhead of a comprehensive attack on the democratic rights of all workers.

52. In Germany, this is taking on particularly aggressive forms. Just as all the bourgeois parties support the genocide in Gaza, they also support the banning of demonstrations, the arrest of Jews who express criticism and the threat of deportation of millions of immigrants. With the new citizenship law, only those who support the state's pro-genocide policies are entitled to German citizenship. The state apparatus is riddled with right-wing extremist terror networks that are covered up and promoted at the highest levels. The German bourgeoisie is once again resorting to fascism and war to fulfil its imperialist goals and suppress resistance to them.

53. The fascist AfD was deliberately constructed for this very purpose. It is not a foreign body in an otherwise healthy organism, but the worst symptom of a thoroughly sick system. All other capitalist parties have courted it, are implementing its programme and have long been preparing to welcome it into government. In Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia, the AfD is even predicted to come out on top in the autumn elections, meaning one of its members could become state premier. There is no serious opposition to the fascists within the bourgeois parties because they all defend a social system that can only be maintained using fascist methods.

54. This is one of the central lessons of 1933, when a conspiracy of the representatives of the military, big capital and the media made Hitler Reich chancellor despite his election defeat in November 1932. Two months later, all the bourgeois parties handed him dictatorial powers. The

elites were convinced that only Hitler could suppress resistance to growing inequality and the preparations for war. They regarded the destruction of the SPD, KPD (Communist Party) and the trade unions as a basic prerequisite for sending workers back to the front after the horrors of the First World War. They could only succeed because of the betrayal of the SPD and KPD leadership, who sabotaged the fight against Hitler.

55. Today there are no mass workers' parties, nor do the fascists have a mass movement of World War II veterans and lumpen petty bourgeois. The fact that far-right parties like the AfD, Trump's Republicans or Le Pen's Rassemblement National can win large shares of the vote and pose as anti-establishment forces is above all the result of the complete bankruptcy of the supposed "left." From Syriza in Greece to Bernie Sanders in the US and the Left Party in Germany, the pseudo-left parties have turned out to be right-wing organisations that openly support social devastation and pro-war policies and block and suppress any left-wing opposition in the working class.

56. The fight against fascism and the constant rightward development in official politics, which has taken hold of all capitalist parties like a cancer, is therefore directly linked to the building of an independent socialist alternative—i.e., the SGP and the ICFI. An independent movement of the working class with a conscious socialist leadership is the only way to stop the fascist danger and the turn of the entire ruling class towards authoritarianism and dictatorship. There is a strong objective basis for this—but like the struggle against war, the struggle against fascism requires the active intervention of our party.

57. The working class is moving to the left. This is reflected in the growing number of strikes, the mass protests against the genocide in Gaza and also in the huge demonstrations against the AfD that have been taking place across the country for weeks. The protests are part of an international mobilisation against war and social devastation and thus stand in contradiction to the right-wing policies of the government and all parties in the Bundestag.

58. At the same time, the organisers, who are closely linked to the government, do everything they can to suppress these points of view and rally the demonstrations behind the government under the battle cry, "Unity of all democrats." As opposition intensified, they cancelled further demonstrations and have been trying to demobilise the movement ever since.

59. The SGP intervenes in this movement and fights to develop it into a conscious movement of the working class against the government and capitalism, because the struggle against fascism and dictatorship can only be successful if it is based on the working class and directed against the capitalist system and its parties. The New Year's Perspective states: "To claim that democratic forms of rule can be defended outside of a frontal assault on the wealth of the ruling elite and its domination over the economy is the height of political and intellectual charlatany."

60. It is the height of cynicism when the ruling class in Germany justifies its return to fascism and war by citing responsibility for the Holocaust. In Orwellian newspeak, it brands all those who speak out against German militarism and the genocide in Gaza as "antisemites," while it itself is working with antisemites and fascists in Ukraine to wage war again against Russia, which was the target of the Nazis' war of extermination 80 years ago.

61. Equating criticism of Zionism with antisemitism is based on racism and mythology. It does not serve the "protection of Jews," but only the interests of the radical right-wing Netanyahu regime and the imperialist powers. However, the aim of this campaign is not only to discredit opponents of German militarism; it is also part of the attempts to rewrite history and whitewash German imperialism of its historical crimes.

62. The SGP opposes this mendacious campaign as well as the previous attempts to falsify history in the interests of German imperialism. We are extending the work of the IYSSE to many universities and oppose

ideological warfare and right-wing ideology at all levels. The IYSSE wages an intensive struggle against irrationalism, identity politics and other forms of bourgeois ideology and are orientating students towards the working class as the only revolutionary force in society. It is intensifying its work among all layers of working class youth, who are becoming radicalised but need a clear perspective and leadership. While the IYSSE undertakes its own initiatives in this respect, it works as the Trotskyist youth movement of the Fourth International under the political guidance of the party leadership.

63. The SGP's lawsuit against the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as Germany's domestic secret service is called) is now also gaining great significance. With the lawsuit we have declared war on the right-wing conspiracy in the government and state. We say that the state's action against the SGP is intended to "silence anyone who speaks out against this aggressive class policy or even just calls it by name." This has been more than confirmed now with the banning of anti-war demonstrations, the detention of opponents of war and the expansion of the police state. The Supreme Court has been delaying its decision in our case for two years now, but we are not making our campaign to defend the SGP and democratic rights dependent on the courts, but are mobilising the working class against fascism and war.

The importance of the international labour alliance IWA-RFC

64. Fascism and war can only be stopped by the independent mobilisation of the working class against capitalism and for the socialist transformation of society. Such a movement is not a beautiful pipe dream but has its objective basis in the enormous intensification of the class struggle throughout the world.

65. The New Year's Perspective notes a quantitative and qualitative development of the class struggle.

The quantitative is the undoubted growth in the sheer number of workers who have engaged in strikes and related forms of protest against exploitation, declining living standards, attacks on democratic rights and militarism. The qualitative development is the global scale of the class struggle, the tendency of the movement of the working class to sweep over national borders and acquire an international character.

66. This is coming to a head in Europe. When mass strikes broke out in Germany, Britain and especially France in January and February last year, the European sections of the ICFI declared that this was "not a series of national trade union struggles that can be resolved by isolated negotiations with one or other capitalist government. Rather, it is an international political struggle, as workers raise similar demands in every country and are met with police crackdowns and legal threats from governments that are discredited and widely despised."

67. Since then, a powerful strike movement has developed, especially in Germany. Postal workers, railway workers, public employees at federal, state, and local level, flight attendants, Lufthansa ground staff and train drivers have all gone on strike. In each of these strikes, the workers' willingness to fight was enormous. Many workers linked their fight against cuts in real wages to the issue of war. Added to this were the international mass protests against the genocide in Gaza, which also brought tens of thousands onto the streets in Germany despite repression and propaganda. The mass demonstrations against the AfD are also part of

the growing opposition movement.

68. But “there remains an immense gap between the advanced level of the objective crisis and the subjective comprehension of this crisis and its political implications in the consciousness of the working class,” as the New Year’s Perspective notes. “This gap finds expression, first and foremost, in the continued domination of the workers’ struggles by the reactionary pro-imperialist trade union bureaucracies and their allies in the social democratic, ex-Stalinist and various forms of petty-bourgeois pseudo-left organizations.”

69. The trade unions are doing everything they can to isolate and cut short the strikes, resorting more and more openly to fraud and repression. Above all, they suppress any serious opposition to the government and its pro-war policy. In the face of the capitalist crisis and the globalisation of production, the trade unions have degenerated into co-managers and act as a corporate police force. And they play a central role in the militarisation of society and the development of a war economy. This is an international phenomenon, but there are few countries where corporatism is as sophisticated and legally enshrined as in Germany.

70. The social consequences are devastating. Average real wages and salaries have not risen since German unification 35 years ago. A huge low-wage sector has been developed. According to the latest figures from the Poverty Report produced by the Paritätischer Gesamtverband federation of charities, 16.8 percent of the population and 21.8 percent of all children live in poverty in one of the richest countries in the world. Two-thirds of the adult poor either work or are retired.

71. “The laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus,” reads the founding programme of the Fourth International. This is also true today. The trade unions are rapidly losing members. From just under 12 million following German reunification, membership of unions in the DGB (German Union Federation) as a whole has fallen to 5.7 million, less than in West Germany alone in 1951. The degree of union organisation is 17 percent, only half as high as in 1980. Only in steel and automotive companies, where it is impossible to get a job without the union’s blessing, is the degree of organisation still above 90 percent. But here the IG Metall, with its 10,000-strong army of works council representatives and shop stewards, acts as the company police.

72. Under these conditions, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is of crucial importance. It enables workers to break through the trade union straitjacket, unite internationally and begin a serious struggle. This is not a spontaneous process. It requires the conscious intervention of the SGP. The ICFI launched the IWA-RFC on May 1, 2021 to help workers take this step. Its founding declaration states: “For the working class to fight back, a path must be created to coordinate its struggles in different factories, industries and countries in opposition to the ruling class and the corporatist unions.”

73. Since then, the ICFI has successfully set up rank-and-file committees in several countries. In Germany, we have made important developments among postal and railway workers and have also set up the first rank-and-file action committees among auto and transport workers. This work must be continued and strengthened. The action committees must create the conditions for genuine workers’ democracy, facilitate free discussion between workers, coordinate the exchange of information and organise joint actions by broad sections of the working class. They must start from the principle that the needs of the working class are more important than the profit interests of the corporations.

74. The IWA-RFC is not a substitute for the revolutionary party, but it is more than just an instrument in the struggle against the trade unions. It should contribute to the development of a movement that breaks the stranglehold of the trade unions and unleashes the enormous power of the working class. It provides the necessary form of organisation to advance such a movement. The building of action committees does not mean that the SGP does not intervene in the trade unions when it can reach workers

there. But it does not do so with the perspective of reforming the trade unions—which is impossible—or of settling into their apparatus, but of unleashing a rebellion against them.

75. The action committees welcome workers with different political views who are prepared to fight together and advance the class struggle. But the action committees are not apolitical or politically neutral. A rebellion against the trade union bureaucracy inevitably raises political and historical questions that need to be discussed and clarified. The SGP is also in favour of raising the political and cultural level of the entire class and developing socialist consciousness in the action committees.

76. Will Lehman’s candidacy for president of the United Auto Workers union in the US was exemplary in this respect. Lehman ran under the slogan “All power to the rank and file” and called for the abolition of the bureaucracy and the establishment of rank-and-file committees. In doing so, he openly campaigned as a socialist and opponent of the capitalist system and called for the end of private property in the automotive industry. Despite attempts by the UAW bureaucracy to suppress the election, he received the support of 5,000 autoworkers.

77. His campaign made two things clear: the ICFI led an opposition within the working class determined to fight; and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees is developing under this leadership into a genuine movement of workers in struggle in factories and workplaces.

The anchoring of the SGP as a new political leadership in the working class

78. The building of the IWA-RFC is inextricably linked to the struggle for an internationalist perspective and the anchoring of our party in the working class. The SGP must intervene in all sections of the working class and build close contacts and political relations with workers, educate the most advanced and serious workers as socialists, and win them to the party.

79. This requires a systematic development of the cadre. “The growth of the mass movement of the working class imposes ever greater demands on members of the party,” David North explained in his introduction to the 2023 SEP Summer School. “Meeting these challenges requires greater attention to the education of the party membership. The most important element of this education is raising the cadres’ knowledge and understanding of the history of the Trotskyist movement.”

80. This includes the central historical events and strategic experiences and achievements of all phases of the Trotskyist movement. The first phase covered a period of 15 years, from the founding of the Left Opposition in October 1923 to the founding congress of the Fourth International in Paris in September 1938. In the struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy and its nationalist perspective of Socialism in One Country, Trotsky laid the theoretical and political foundations for the new International, whose founding became necessary after the German catastrophe.

81. The second phase covered a further period of 15 years, from the founding of the Fourth International to the split with the Pabloite leadership of the International Secretariat and the founding of the International Committee in November 1953. In this phase, the orthodox Trotskyists defended Marxist principles against a series of petty-bourgeois tendencies that broke with Trotskyism and moved rapidly to the right. These included the Burnham-Shachtman tendency, the “Three Theses Group” and also the Pabloites—who ultimately expressed the pessimism of demoralised layers of the petty bourgeoisie and turned away from the working class and the perspective of socialist revolution.

82. The third phase involved a 33-year struggle within the International Committee, which began with the publication of James P. Cannon's Open Letter to the World Trotskyist Movement. It ended with the suspension of the Workers Revolutionary Party in December 1985 and the final break with the national-opportunist renegades in February 1986. It was a period that we have described as a protracted civil war within the International Committee, characterised by a series of intense political conflicts with Pabloite tendencies both outside and inside the ICFI.

83. The fourth phase of the ICFI, from the split with the WRP to 2019, is one of the most important periods of the entire Marxist movement, which is becoming increasingly clear in retrospect. The International Committee emerged enormously strengthened from the split. The decisive victory over Pabloite opportunism formed the basis for an enormous theoretical, political and organisational advance of the ICFI. We have rightly described the theoretical and political clarification and development after the expulsion of the opportunists as the "renaissance of Trotskyism."

84. The most important achievements of the fourth phase were summarised by David North in his report to the 2019 SEP Summer School, in which he stated:

The critical preparatory work of removing the Pabloites, rebuilding the world party on an internationalist foundation, elaborating the international strategy of the ICFI, defending the historical heritage of the Fourth International, converting the leagues of the International Committee into parties and establishing the *World Socialist Web Site* were the main achievements of the fourth stage.

85. On this basis, the ICFI was able to greatly expand the political influence of the International Committee and enter the fifth phase. David North has characterised this as follows:

This is the stage that will witness a vast growth of the ICFI as the World Party of Socialist Revolution. The objective processes of economic globalization, identified by the International Committee more than 30 years ago, have undergone a further colossal development. Combined with the emergence of new technologies that have revolutionized communications, these processes have internationalized the class struggle to a degree that would have been hard to imagine even 25 years ago. The revolutionary struggle of the working class will develop as an interconnected and unified world movement. The International Committee of the Fourth International will be built as the conscious political leadership of this objective socioeconomic process. It will counterpose to the capitalist politics of imperialist war the class-based strategy of world socialist revolution. This is the essential historical task of the new stage in the history of the Fourth International.

86. To fulfil this historical task, it is necessary to continue and intensify the educational work and, on this basis, to involve the whole party in the political work and to constantly develop the political line and political initiatives. "For the Marxist movement, historical knowledge has always been the foundation of revolutionary practice. The assimilation of historical experience is the basis for a theoretically guided practice," said North.

87. This is especially true in this new period of war and revolution,

which is now rapidly coming to a head. The deepening crisis of world capitalism and the class struggle create the objective conditions for socialist revolution. "But," to paraphrase Trotsky, "the great historical task will not be solved until the SGP and the ICFI are at the head of the proletariat."



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