Socialism instead of war! — Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei approved for Berlin state elections

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The state electoral committee has now decided on the admission of parties to the Berlin House of Representatives (state legislature) election on September 20.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) was approved without any objections, having met all requirements. Its members and supporters have held thousands of conversations with Berlin workers and young people in neighbourhoods, parks, outside libraries and supermarkets, and obtained the required 2,200 voter signatures prescribed for approval.

In an undemocratic procedure, only 17 of the 30 parties that had applied to participate were approved. Two of them are standing only in individual districts; the last House of Representatives elections saw 30 parties represented on the ballot.

With the SGP on the ballot for the Berlin election, there is a party that openly opposes the pro-war policy of all the parties in the German parliament, the Bundestag, and which fights for a socialist perspective that places the needs of the population above the profits of the super-rich.

It is worth noting that many smaller nominally left-wing parties that had still stood five years ago made no effort whatsoever to participate in this election—among them the Klimaliste and Team Todenhöfer. Others, such as the party Mera25 founded by former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, the Pirate Party, or the Tenants' Party, failed to clear the hurdle of collecting sufficient supporting signatures.

Many of these groups evidently refrained from standing because they do not wish to take votes away from the Left Party, which is seeking to provide Berlin's next mayor in this election. The SGP is thereby the only party on the ballot that opposes the all-party coalition for rearmament, war and the dismantling of social provisions.

In a situation in which the Merz-Klingbeil government is rearming on a scale not seen since Hitler, raising military expenditure to over 200 billion euros annually, reintroducing conscription and converting industry to a war economy; under conditions in which Germany is practically already waging war against the nuclear power Russia—the SGP provides the working class and young people in Berlin with a voice against the war at the ballot box. The SGP states clearly that a nuclear catastrophe can only be prevented if the working class itself intervenes in political events, expropriates the banks and corporations and places them under democratic control.

Ballot approval is a decisive step in the political offensive against the Left Party and its satellites, those forces being deployed to divert the growing opposition of workers and young people and subordinate it to the war plans of the ruling class.

The Left Party is no opponent of militarism; it is a component of the war coalition. It voted in the Bundesrat (upper chamber of parliament) in favour of the trillion-euro war credits and made possible Merz's rapid election as Federal Chancellor. Its parliamentary group leader Heidi Reichinnek has stated unambiguously that the party is "fully on board" with "improving Germany's defence capability." The then party Chairman Jan van Aken jubilantly welcomed the assassination of the Iranian state leadership by the United States.

The Left Party claims to be able to resolve the social catastrophe in Berlin. That is a lie. The Left Party and its predecessor, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), participated in the Berlin state government for 16 years—16 years in which they cut tens of thousands of public sector posts, reduced wages and sold off 150,000 publicly-owned flats to financial investors. The social

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misery from which Berlin suffers today is their handiwork.

The Left Party is now preparing to pick up where it left off with a re-run of its coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens. In Elif Eralp, it has fielded a distinctly right-wing lead candidate who openly backs Israel and its genocidal war against the Palestinians. Eralp's declared role model is New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who owed his election to the massive opposition to Trump—and whose first act in office was holding a "productive" meeting with Trump at the White House. That is precisely the Left Party's programme too: high-sounding social promises in the election campaign, betrayal the day after.

The SGP decisively rejects the claim that a vote for the Left Party puts a block on the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). The opposite is the case. Right-wing politics dressed up in left-wing phrases creates the breeding ground for the AfD. It generates the disillusionment and despair that the right-wing demagogues exploit. Nowhere is this clearer than in Thuringia, where Bodo Ramelow served as State Premier for the Left Party for 10 years. He left behind a trail of social devastation that cleared the way for Höcke's even more reactionary wing of the AfD, which stands at 40 percent in polls there.

The AfD presents itself as an opponent of the establishment parties but drives their reactionary politics to the extreme. This it shares with its role model Donald Trump, who stood for election as a populist and as president embodies the dictatorship of the financial oligarchy. It was the first to demand that military spending be raised to 5 percent of gross domestic product—a goal that is now being implemented by the federal government coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and SPD. It wants to push through rearmament and the social attacks supported by all parties with unrestrained brutality.

It was built up for precisely this purpose, and that is why its programme is being put into practice by the CDU/CSU, SPD, the Greens and the Left Party. The AfD cannot be combated in alliance with such "democrats." One might as well ally oneself with the arsonist to put out the fire.

The fascists can only be stopped by the independent mobilisation of the working class against war and its root cause, capitalism. This requires the building of an international socialist party and a break with all parties that defend capitalist property.

That is precisely the programme for which the SGP is standing in the Berlin state elections. We counterpose the international unity of the working class to the growing nationalism and warmongering. We fight for the defence of every job and against all cuts to wages, pensions, health, education and public infrastructure. We demand the expropriation of the banks, corporations and billion-euro fortunes and democratic control of the economy by the working class. And together with our sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), we are building a worldwide movement against war and capitalism.

This week, our supporters have begun putting up hundreds of election posters across Berlin. In the coming weeks we will conduct an intensive election campaign, with information stalls, rallies and election meetings, to discuss the central political questions and go on the offensive. Every seat we win in the House of Representatives we will use as a platform for the struggle against war, social devastation and fascism.

The objective foundations for a socialist counter-offensive are in place. The trade war places fierce class struggles on the agenda. In the United States a powerful movement is developing against Trump, and across Europe the working class is engaged in waves of strikes and protests. What is missing is political leadership—an international socialist party that provides the spontaneous struggles with a conscious perspective. The SGP is the German section of this party. Its candidacy in the Berlin state elections is a decisive step in its construction.

Get involved now! Support the SGP's election campaign! Circulate our election statement! Register as an active supporter and join the SGP!

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