

Political programme of the Socialist Unity Party (Berlin, 21 and 22 April 1946)

Caption: On 21 and 22 April 1946 in the Soviet occupied zone, the German Social Democrat Party (SPD) and the German Communist Party (KPD) merge to form the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

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Principles and aims of the Socialist Unity Party (Berlin, 21 and 22 April 1946)

‘Twelve years of Fascist dictatorship and six years of Hitler’s war dragged the German people into the most terrible economic, political and moral catastrophe in its history.

Germany was transformed into heap of ruins

Hitlerian fascism was the instrument of control wielded by the most rabid, reactionary and imperialist elements in the world of capital, the arms barons, the big banks and the great landowners.

Fascism rose to power through the division of the working class. Resorting to the most ruthless terror tactics, it destroyed all democratic rights and freedoms and turned Germany into a military prison.

This left the field open for an unbridled imperialist policy of war. German imperialism heedlessly sacrificed the lives and wellbeing of millions of workers, farmers, tradespeople, intellectual workers and, especially, young people to its world power ambitions; it gambled the wellbeing and future of the nation.

What is the way out of this catastrophe?

Militarism and the imperialist policies of violence and war have twice plunged Germany into the gravest national misfortune.

In order to secure peace, rebuild the German economy and maintain German unity, it is essential to destroy all that remains of Hitler’s Fascism and to eradicate militarism and imperialism.

Never again must the forces of reaction gain control!

The unity of the labour movement and the combined strength of all anti-Fascist and democratic parties are the vital precondition therefor.

Of all strata in German society, working people have endured the greatest sufferings and borne the heaviest burdens. They make up the great majority of the people. It is they who will bear the brunt of reconstruction and reparations.

The labouring people must therefore also determine the fortunes of the new democratic Germany.

The working class will unite all the democratic and progressive elements in the nation. It is the most consistent democratic force and the most resolute opponent of imperialism. It is the force which will overcome our national misfortune.

Only the working class has a great historic goal: socialism!

Hence the future belongs to the working class, in confederation with all working people.

The bitter experiences of the past teach us that the working class will only take the lead in the construction of the new, free and indivisible German Republic and can only go on to transform the entire pattern of political, economic, cultural and spiritual relations, and to build socialism, if it overcomes the divisions in its own ranks, establishes the Socialist Unity Party and rallies the entire working population around itself.

The most urgent need of the hour is thus for the Social Democratic Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Germany to unite!

Against this background, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany is established on the basis of the following principles and aims:

I. Current demands

1. Punishment of all who bear the guilt of war and of all war criminals, removal of all traces of the Hitler regime in legislation and administration.

Complete purging of Fascists and reactionaries from all areas of public life, from all official bodies and governing bodies of industry.

2. Abolition of capitalist monopolies, transfer of enterprises belonging to those who bear the guilt of war, Fascists and war profiteers to self-governing bodies.

3. Destruction of reactionary militarism, disempowerment of the great landowners and implementation of democratic land reform.

4. Extension of self-government on the basis of elections conducted democratically. Management of all public institutions and direction of the economy by honourable Democrats and confirmed anti-Fascists. Systematic training of eligible workers as officers of self-governing bodies, as teachers, people's judges and enterprise managers, with special focus on the promotion of women.

5. Transfer of all public undertakings, mineral resources and mines, banks, savings institutions and insurance companies to the municipalities, provinces and *Länder* or to the national government of Germany. Grouping of economic undertakings in chambers of industry, with involvement on an equal footing of trade unions and cooperative societies. Intensive promotion of the cooperative system. Limitation of business profits and protection of working people from capitalist exploitation.

6. Development of the economy and safeguarding of the currency on the basis of economic plans. Planned promotion of the production of essential commodities in industry and craft trades with the involvement of private initiative. Vigorous intensification and promotion of agriculture. Reconstruction of devastated cities and rapid restoration of transport systems and traffic safety. Establishment of the basis for the reintegration of Germany into the international exchange of goods through the export of essential commodities and the import of raw materials and foodstuffs which are lacking, also with the aid of international goods credit. Restructuring of the credit system on the basis of public credit institutions.

Employment for all working people. Provision for the vital needs of the broad mass of the population in terms of food, clothing, housing and heating.

7. Democratic tax reform. Simplification of the tax system by the rigorous consolidation of all forms of tax. Greater consideration of social circumstances in assessment for tax. The wealthier must bear more of the burden of war debt.

8. Safeguarding of democratic popular rights. Freedom of expression in speech, image and the written word with guaranteed protection of the democratic State from reactionary attack. Freedom of conviction and religion. Equality of all citizens before the law without distinction as to race and sex. Equal rights for women in public life and at work. State protection for the individual. Democratic forms of law and justice.

9. Guaranteed rights to form associations, to strike and to engage in collective bargaining. Recognition of the works council as the legitimate body for the representation of manual and clerical workers in the enterprise. Involvement of the works council on an equal footing in all matters affecting the enterprise and production.

10. An eight-hour day to be the normal working day. Extension of legal provisions for health and safety at work, in particular for women and young people. Extension of uniform social security provisions to include all working people. Reform of social welfare and of protection for mothers, children and young people. Special welfare arrangements for the victims of Fascism and the care of resettled populations and repatriated prisoners.

11. Democratic reform of the entire education and training system. Development of the comprehensive school. Education of young people in a spirit of progressive democracy, friendship between peoples and true humanity. Every German has a right to education in accordance with his inclinations and capacities. Separation of Church from State and school. Cultural renewal of Germany; promotion of literature, art and science.

12. Restoration of a united Germany as an anti-Fascist Republic based on parliamentary democracy, formation of a national government by the anti-Fascist and democratic parties.

13. Recognition of the duty to make reparations for the damage caused to other nations by the Hitler regime. Guarantee of an average European standard of living for the German people in the spirit of the Potsdam Conference of the three Great Powers.

14. Vigorous action to combat incitement to racial hatred and any form of intimidation of other peoples. Peaceful and good-neighbourly coexistence with other nations.

II. The fight for socialism

However, the system of capitalist exploitation and oppression will not be overcome and the anarchy of capitalist production methods removed, and peace will not be finally secured, merely by the achievement of the current demands.

The goal of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany is liberation from all forms of exploitation and oppression, from economic crises, poverty, unemployment and the imperialist menace of war. This goal, the solution of the national and social problems affecting the life of our people, can only be achieved through socialism.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany is fighting for the conversion of the capitalist ownership of the means of production into social ownership, for the conversion of capitalist goods production into socialist production pursued for and by society. In bourgeois society, the working class is the exploited and oppressed class. It can only liberate itself from exploitation and oppression by simultaneously liberating the whole of society from exploitation and oppression for good and by establishing a socialist society. Socialism guarantees all nations, all of humanity, freedom to exercise their rights and develop their capabilities. Only through socialism will mankind enter the realm of freedom and general prosperity.

The basic precondition for the establishment of a socialist social order is the conquest of political power by the working class. It will achieve this in an alliance with other working people.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany will fight for this new State within the arena of the democratic Republic.

The present special situation in Germany, which has arisen on a new economic foundation following the crushing of the reactionary apparatus of State violence and the establishment of a democratic State, presents an opportunity to prevent the forces of reaction from opposing the final liberation of the working class by means of violence and civil war. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany seeks to tread the democratic path to socialism; however, it will resort to revolutionary means if the capitalist class relinquishes the arena of democracy.

III. The essence of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany

The historic task of the united labour movement is to organise the struggle of the working class and labouring people purposefully and consistently. It is for the Socialist Unity Party of Germany to guide the current endeavours of the working class in the direction of the struggle for socialism and to lead the working class and all labouring people in the fulfilment of this, their historic mission.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany can only wage its struggle successfully if it unites the best and most progressive forces of the working people and, by representing their interests, becomes the party of the working population.

This campaign organisation rests upon the democratic decision-making prerogative of its members, on the democratic election of all party leaderships and on the fact that all members, deputies, delegates and directorates of the Party are bound by decisions taken democratically.

The interests of working people are the same in all countries with capitalist production methods. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany therefore declares itself in accord with workers mindful of their class in all countries. It fosters a spirit of solidarity with peace-loving and democratic peoples throughout the world.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany is fighting as an independent party in its own country for the true national interests its people. As a German socialist party, it is the most progressive and best national force which will act with all its powers and with all its energy in defence of the economic, cultural and political unity of Germany against all particularist tendencies.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany will draw up a programme on the basis of these principles and demands, which will be presented by the Party executive to the membership and on which a decision will be taken at the next ordinary Party Congress.

The unity of the socialist movement is the best guarantee for the unity of Germany! It will secure the victory of socialism! Socialism is the standard of the future!

Beneath this sign we shall conquer!'