

Socialdemocratic Party of Switzerland: Resolution of the Executive adopted at the Party Congress on 28 June 2014 in Winterthur

Keeping up the pressure for reform of the Socialist International

In a resolution adopted by the Party Congress on 26 March 2011, the Socialdemocratic Party of Switzerland (SP) advocated a “far-reaching reform of the Socialist International.” In its resolution, the SP calls attention to the long history of the SI and states the values to which the SI subscribes. However, the SP found itself obliged to place on record the fact that the SI as an organization and some of its member parties fall well short of the hopes and expectations placed in them. SP Switzerland therefore advocated far-reaching reform of the SI; exclusion from the SI of the anti-democratic parties which fail to respect human rights; an instrument enabling urgent measures to be taken if a member party is in flagrant breach of human rights; greater political relevance of the SI and, to that end, enhanced transparency and more democracy in the internal SI decision-making process; opening up the SI and providing greater participation opportunities for trade unions and affiliated NGOs; together with the development of a comprehensive campaign capability and sustainable pursuit of shared central objectives. “Our contribution payments to the SI and ultimately even our membership of the SI itself depend on an unambiguous and unmistakable clarification of these issues within the SI,” in the words of the resolution adopted on 26 March 2011.

More than three years have gone by since that resolution. Three years in which SP Switzerland together with more than 30 member parties of the SI from every continent have fought intensively for renewal of the SI. The long-standing SI President Giorgos Papandreou and the Secretary General of the SI for many years Luis Ayala remain closed to all discussion. A letter from 29 party chairmen – including Christian Levrat – remained unanswered. There was also practically no response to the sustained criticism of the SI calling for the member parties’ views to be surveyed. At the SI Congress held in Cape Town (South Africa) in 2012, the reform group failed in its attempt to install a new executive body by 46 votes to 36. Since then, Papandreou and Ayala have been even less willing to seek a compromise and feel that their own positions of power have been strengthened. The arbitrary way in which the SI decides whom to invite or not to invite to any meeting is more apparent than ever. In relation to the world outside, normality is celebrated. But internally the forces which belong to the reform group to which the SP feels the closest affiliation are being marginalized.

As announced in the Party Congress resolution of 26 March 2011, the SP has therefore reduced its membership contribution to the SI since 2013. At the same time the SP has made initial contacts with the Progressive Alliance. This is a loose new network whose main focus of attention at this juncture is “decent work for all”. It provides an opportunity to maintain and deepen global contacts with progressive parties and organizations of civil society. It remains to be seen how this project will develop. SP Switzerland is currently watching this project from a somewhat critical distance.

Until further notice, the following issues are of central importance to the SP:

1. SP Switzerland does not wish to see a split of the Socialist International but continues to advocate a far-reaching reform of the SI based on the four-point programme defined by the forces of reform in 2011 and pursued ever since.
2. To an even greater extent than in the past, the SP Europe (SPE) and direct bilateral contacts in particular with sister parties in neighbouring countries constitute the politically decisive international network of SP Switzerland.

3. At the global level, SP Switzerland is taking up, within the framework of its limited possibilities, the opportunities which are open to it to launch and pursue global campaigns with progressive forces both in the Progressive Alliance and in other forums.
4. The Progressive Alliance must serve neither to dilute the political principles of the social-democratic family nor seek to replace the SI. The goal must remain that of reintegrating the Progressive Alliance into a renewed SI in the context of an overall political solution to be reached at the SI Congress in 2016.