

Socialist Equality Party candidate for the European election speaks to German radio

Our reporters
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On Wednesday April 8 a reporter for the West German broadcasting service (WDR) conducted an interview in Berlin with Christoph Vandreier, one of the candidates standing for the German Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG) in the forthcoming European elections. We print below the questions and answers. They were given in the context of a planned radio program featuring parties that do not currently have representation in the European parliament.

Q. What are the aims of your party?

The (PSG) aims to establish a society that prioritizes the needs of the broad masses of the population rather than the profit interests of a tiny social layer. While all other parties discuss how they can save capitalism, we want to replace it. The PSG is the only party that openly states that capitalism has failed and must be replaced by a socialist society based on the democratic control of the economy.

Q. What is your position on the Left Party? Is there no common ground?

The Left Party is a bureaucratic maneuver by former Stalinist bureaucrats from the east of the country and some trade union bureaucrats from the west with the aim of preventing an independent movement of the working population. Our goal is just the opposite: we are seeking to develop an independent and international party dedicated to the socialist transformation of society.

What failed in 1989 was not socialism, but Stalinism. We represent genuine socialist principles that require the democratic control of the economy, and we are seeking to develop an international movement of working people to this end.

Q. Today very few people are familiar with Leon Trotsky. How do you propose to utilise his ideas

today? Is there still Stalinism?

Stalinism exists in as much as many people continue to identify socialism with Stalinism. If one identifies oneself with the goals of socialism, then one cannot remain silent over Stalinism. One must explain what Stalinism was and what differentiates it from socialism. In this respect only the Trotskyist movement is able to explain the nature of Stalinism based on its decades' long defence of socialist principles against the Soviet bureaucracy. The Trotskyist movement never adapted to the trade union bureaucracy nor the Stalinist bureaucrats, who have now united in the Left Party.

Q. You are opposed to the trade unions?

Firstly one must state that on every important issue the trade unions stand on the side of the bosses. They are the force which administer the crisis and implement cuts against workers in the interests of the corporation. This is apparent in the case of Opel, where workers have been deserted by the trade unions, which cooperate with management on the best way to cut jobs and wages. If workers want to defend their interests today they must develop an independent party. They cannot hope do it within the trade unions or by giving their vote to the Left Party.

Q. What do you hope to achieve in the European parliament?

Today all of the important questions affecting workers and young people are posed internationally and can only be answered internationally. The European elections are so important because European workers must develop a common strategy. It is necessary to shed the illusion that the European Union serves to unite Europe. The European Union institutions implement wage and welfare cuts. They are the instruments of the banks and companies. At the same time it is evident that the conflicts between the great

powers have not been overcome by the European Union, but are in fact assuming ever sharper forms as the crisis deepens. A unification of Europe is only possible from the grass roots, based on the initiative of workers and in the interest of the working population. To this end we propose the United Socialist States of Europe as the alternative to the European Union of the banks and big business.

Q. How do you propagate your ideas?

The most important tool of our political work is the *World Socialist Web Site*, the most widely read socialist publication on the Internet. On the WSWS we analyse current political developments, discuss the most important lessons arising in the 20th century and seek to build a new international party of the working population on this basis. In addition we will produce a TV spot for the European election. We aim to conduct an ambitious campaign and will be publicly visible through our campaigns, the distribution of tens of thousands of leaflets and our book tables.

Q. Do you mind being referred to as extreme left?

We are the only really democratic party. We think that the majority of the population must take part in the political process. We are struggling for a society in which the economy is subject to democratic control. That is, that the really important decisions currently made in the corporate headquarters—whether jobs should be shed, or changes made to wages and working conditions—should be made and controlled democratically. These are our aims. Anyone who regards such a program as extremist merely reveals his own undemocratic standpoint and rejection of a genuinely democratic organisation of society.

Q. Do you believe that you have new possibilities to address people in the wake of the financial crisis? At a time when capitalism has failed?

The financial crisis shows that society is divided into classes and characterised by glaring contradictions. The crucial question is: how is this crisis to be solved? It is to be solved in the interests of the majority of the population on the basis of abolishing capitalism, or solved in the interests of the banks and companies and at the expense of the majority of the population. We are the only party that says completely openly: this crisis must be solved through the abolition of capitalism. On this basis we will certainly be able to find a large audience and conduct a very successful election

campaign.

Q. The abolition of capitalism sounds very idealistic and unrealistic. Do you really believe that it is possible?

I believe that if it is not possible to overcome capitalism then society confronts disaster. In the 20th century the crisis of capitalism led to two world wars. We are now again in a historical crisis, which is not simply of a conjunctural nature, but has profound roots in the capitalist system and will lead to major social and political convulsions. The only possibility of preventing a disaster is the independent mobilisation of the population in the struggle for a new society which places the interests of the majority at the centre. I think it is unrealistic to maintain that one can continue to lead any sort of satisfactory life under capitalism.

Q. How do you estimate your chances in the European elections?

We are the only party that openly states who bears responsibility for the crisis and which represents the interests of workers. I think that we will be able to conduct a very successful election campaign and be able to achieve a good result in the election.

Q. What has been the reaction so far to your election campaign?

During the past month the PSG collected over 4,600 signatures for its election campaign in public campaigns conducted in front of factories, employment offices and shopping centres. Workers were quite prepared to support the PSG, because it is the only party that openly declares who bears responsibility for the crisis. Workers are not prepared to pay for the crisis because they are not responsible for it. They were not shovelling billions of euros into their pockets during past years. Many people now recognise that capitalism no longer offers a future for the majority of the population and have subsequently reacted very positively to the program and election manifesto of the PSG.



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