

# Powerful start to German Socialist Equality Party campaign in European elections

Our reporters  
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On Sunday, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP) launched its campaign for the European elections at a meeting in Berlin. The speakers included leading members of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Britain and France in addition to leaders of the SGP.

They spoke in defence of Julian Assange, warned against the return of fascism and war, called for workers to prosecute the class struggle across Europe and internationally, and pledged to build the Fourth International as the mass party of world socialist revolution.

The second election meeting will take place Tuesday in Frankfurt.

“The fact that we have two leading representatives of the International Committee of the Fourth International from Britain and France participating is very significant and corresponds to our central orientation in the European election campaign,” said Johannes Stern, SGP Executive Committee member and writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*, who chaired the event. At the centre of the campaign, he said, was “the establishment of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International throughout Europe and the unification of the European working class on the basis of an international socialist programme.”

The participation of Chris Marsden, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party of the UK, was of particular importance, Stern said. Marsden was playing a leading role in the ICFI’s campaign to defend Julian Assange and had spoken at several rallies in front of the Ecuadorian embassy in London in the weeks leading up to Assange’s arrest.

Addressing the audience in Berlin, Marsden said, “The International Committee and all its sections are conducting an intense global campaign against the

arrest of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and his extradition to the United States. He faces charges that could see him sentenced to life in prison or even the death penalty.” Millions of people regarded Assange “as a hero for the essential role he played in exposing imperialist war crimes.”

Marsden explained that the defence of Assange required the mobilisation of the working class. Pseudo-left tendencies, such as the British Socialist Workers Party, either draped themselves in silence or spread the propaganda lies of the bourgeois press to discredit Assange. Jeremy Corbyn, too, was ready to throw Assange to the wolves. The leader of the British Labour Party knew that “his assigned role is to support a collapsing Tory government and prevent the working class from intervening politically in its own defence.”

Marsden concluded by saying: “The fate of Assange and Chelsea Manning, who have done so much to expose imperialist crimes, is now in the hands of the only social force that can end such crimes—the international working class.” The ICFI would make his defence a key issue in the election campaign and “organise meetings, protests and demonstrations in the coming weeks to demand Assange’s immediate release and safe return to Australia.”

The second speaker was the SGP’s lead candidate and deputy party chair, Christoph Vandreier, who spoke via livestream transmission from the US. He is currently speaking at a series of meetings across the United States to present the English edition of his book *Why are they back?*, which shows how the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) was ideologically and politically prepared by the state intelligence agencies, the media, all the parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament) and prominent professors.

“At the first three meetings in San Francisco, San Diego and Detroit, I was very struck by the great interest among workers and youth in the United States in the rise of the far-right in Germany,” said Vandreier. “This was not regarded as a remote question, or one that had nothing to do with the situation in the US itself. It was very much seen as an expression of an international development that affects every country in the world.”

In the United States, he explained, President Donald Trump was relying increasingly on fascist elements to impose his crackdown on immigrants and refugees and advance war preparations against the nuclear powers Russia and China. Now, he has “proclaimed the fight against socialism, and thereby made it clear what the mobilisation of the right-wing dregs of society is all about: Suppressing the growing opposition in the working class to war, social inequality and attacks on democratic rights.”

Alex Lantier, national secretary of the Parti d'égalité socialiste (Socialist Equality Party), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, spoke from Paris about the growth of the class struggle in Europe and worldwide. He cited the protests of the “yellow vests” in France, the mass demonstrations in Algeria, the teachers’ strike in Poland and the strikes and protests of nurses and caregivers in Portugal. “Even Berlin, where the German bourgeoisie dreams of becoming the hegemon of a remilitarised and capitalist Europe without social concessions, is the centre of a political counter-offensive by workers,” Lantier said.

“In order to unite and successfully conduct these struggles, it is necessary to build national sections of the ICFI as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class. Workers have in mind the example of the revolutionary uprising of the Egyptian workers in 2011, where three years of heroic struggle ended in 2013 with a bloody coup by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. This is an unforgettable lesson that has been paid for with thousands of lives: Protests are not enough to defeat the ruling class. Workers need a revolutionary leadership.”

The chairman of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, Ulrich Rippert, focused his remarks on this central question. He recalled that this year marked the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was the beginning of German capitalist reunification and, a

short time later, the dissolution of the Soviet Union. “Only the Trotskyist movement had a correct assessment of this fundamental political upheaval and fought for a progressive perspective,” said Rippert. “That’s what makes our party so strong.”

While the German Socialist Unity Party/Party of Democratic Socialism—the predecessor of today’s Left Party—and the other Stalinist parties in Eastern Europe restored and defended capitalism, the ICFI alone opposed the official propaganda proclaiming the demise of these regimes as the “end of history.” The ICFI tirelessly stressed that with the end of the Soviet Union, it was not socialism that had failed, but Stalinism. Now it was clear that the supposed “triumph of capitalism” did not bring peace, social progress or democracy, but exactly the opposite: massive social inequality, authoritarianism and the return of fascism and war.

Rippert stressed that the return of these evils was a result of the historic crisis of capitalism, but at the same time created the conditions to overcome them. He pointed to the explosive development of the class struggle and quoted from the founding programme of the Fourth International, written by Leon Trotsky: “The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.”

Rippert’s concluding appeal for all in attendance to become politically active and participate in the construction of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution was well received. Most of the participants who were attending an SGP event for the first time, including two workers from Italy, signed up to get involved. Many expressed gratitude for the party’s defence of Julian Assange, saying they wanted to join the campaign for his release and support the SGP campaign.



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