

SEP holds final UK election meeting in London

“Our fight is for workers to base themselves on a socialist and internationalist perspective, one rooted in a profound concern for history and informed by its lessons”

Our reporters
10 December 2019

Workers, youth and students from across the UK attended a successful rally Sunday, addressed by the Socialist Equality Party’s general election candidates, National Secretary Chris Marsden, Thomas Scripps and Dennis Leech.

Peter Schwarz, the secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International, brought greetings to the rally, along with Alex Lantier, National Secretary of the Parti de l’égalité socialiste in France.

Opening the rally, Scripps explained that one of the central pillars of the SEP’s election campaign is the fight to free WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

“For people of my generation, the persecution of Assange—the most important investigative journalist of the 21st century—covers the entirety of our politically conscious lives. Anyone a little younger is unlikely to remember a time when he was not illegally imprisoned, isolated, slandered and tortured.”

Scripps explained that in the last weeks “the veil of lies” concocted against Assange “has been ripped aside, to reveal the full scope of the ruling class’s criminality.” The November 19 closure by Swedish prosecutors of their investigation into bogus allegations of sexual assault was final proof of the fact that the Swedish case has never been anything more than a paper-thin pretext for Assange’s imprisonment.

Scripps traced the decade-long manhunt of Assange: “What concerns the ruling class above all was revealed in a leaked Department of Defence document, published by Buzzfeed, which worried that the WikiLeaks exposures of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan ‘could be used by the press or our adversaries to negatively impact support for current operations in the region.’ That is, WikiLeaks might be the spark to anti-war sentiment all over the world.

“The viciousness of Assange’s persecution flows not from the strength of the ruling class, but from its fearful recognition of its own social isolation ... In the face of a rising tide of working class revolt—in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Haiti, France, Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and in the United States itself — states can only wage their predatory wars through a further evisceration of democratic rights and a turn to ever more extreme authoritarian violence.”

For the last four years of Assange’s incarceration, Jeremy Corbyn has been Labour Party leader:

“At any stage, a call from Corbyn for a mass demonstration in his defence would have brought hundreds of thousands on to the streets, transforming Assange’s situation. But this is not Corbyn’s politics.”

Corbyn has stated that Assange’s extradition to the US for exposing war

crimes “was a matter for the courts,” before adding that if Sweden resurrected its discredited allegations against Assange, he would have to answer them. This was the position also taken by Corbyn’s cheerleaders in the pseudo-left—the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party—to justify refusing to defend Assange.

The tide was now turning with rising support worldwide for Assange, including an open letter by “more than 60 eminent medical doctors” to the British Home Secretary, Priti Patel condemning Britain’s denial of adequate medical care to Assange and calling for him to be immediately moved to a university teaching hospital.

Alex Lantier spoke via Skype as he could not attend in person due to the strikes by French transport workers and others.

“The SEP’s campaign, to unify British and European workers in struggle against the European Union and the Brexiteer faction of the ruling elite, is of historic importance. It comes amid an international resurgence of the class struggle, posing the question of the international unification of the working class on the order of the day. Railworkers, postal workers and broader sections of workers and youth are mobilizing in both Britain and France, amid an international wave of strikes and protests over the last year that has mobilized hundreds of millions of workers.”

Lantier explained that in France, “Rail traffic is halted, many city centres are deserted, most schools are closed, flights are cancelled and, due to refinery shutdowns, a shortage of petrol is emerging in parts of the country. Many youth have joined protests, and several university administrations pre-emptively shut down their universities to prevent students from occupying them.”

“The working class is once again demonstrating its enormous social power and revolutionary potential,” Lantier said. “The resurgence of the class struggle raises before the working class and youth complex political challenges and tasks—above all, the building of a new socialist leadership.”

Detailing the mass violence used against yellow vest protesters and strikers, he explained, “On Thursday, Macron deployed armoured cars, water cannon, soldiers and riot police armed with assault rifles and rubber bullet guns to attack strikers ... As we wrote on the *World Socialist Web Site*, the capitalist state is again being exposed as a thinly veiled dictatorship of the financial elite.”

Opposing the agenda of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the France Insoumise (Unsubmissive France) party, Lantier stated that the PES was fighting to build a socialist leadership. “The way forward for workers is a

complete and uncompromising break, both organizationally and politically, with the unions and the political parties allied to them. Together with its sister parties in the ICFI, the Parti de l'égalité socialiste insists that the struggle of the working class for socialism is on the historical agenda."

Peter Schwarz said, "With the resurgence of class struggle the resolution of the crisis of leadership remains, as in 1938, when the Fourth International was founded, the most urgent task."

The growth of the class struggle "creates conditions for an enormous growth of the ICFI as the world party of socialist revolution. But this is not an automatic process. The work of our party is of decisive significance for the political orientation of the emerging revolutionary movement in the working class."

Schwarz noted that the "bourgeoisie is highly aware of the significance of the ICFI." In 2018 the German government listed the SGP [Socialist Equality Party] in its annual report as a "left extremist" organisation, that is subject to surveillance.

The "decision to list the SGP was clearly a reaction to its growing influence, particularly among students in its struggle against right-wing ideology and militarism in the universities."

The *Verfassungsschutz* [German secret service] states that it is not the "SGP's overt actions, but the party's ideas that are criminal"—because it encourages "thinking with the use of concepts and categories that counterpoise class to nation; that it strives to develop within the working class consciousness of its social interests; that it promotes hostility to capitalism; that it denounces imperialism and militarism; and that it rejects all compromises with the main political parties and trade unions."

These attacks recalled the anti-socialist laws of Bismarck, which banned the Social Democratic Party from 1878 to 1888 and the ban of the German Communist Party and Social Democrats by the Nazis.

The *Verfassungsschutz* documents were not simply aimed against the SGP but expressed "in pseudo-legal form the ferocious hostility to socialism—rooted in a fear of mounting working-class discontent and its political radicalization—that is fuelling the efforts to legitimize fascist ideas."

Schwarz explained the role of the right-wing extremist Humboldt University academic, Jörg Baberowski. "Despite the fact that the main media and academia continue to close ranks behind Baberowski, his role as a fascistic ideologue is largely recognised by students and workers.

"At the end of last month representatives of the student unions of four universities as well as well as a representative of the German IYSSE and Thomas Scripps from the British IYSSE shared the platform of a meeting, organised by the IYSSE, against the right-wing danger at universities."

Today, with the "growth of the far right and transformation of trade unions and reformist organisations into right-wing bourgeois parties, there was no middle of the road. The issue today is socialism or barbarism. It's either capitalism, war and dictatorship, or proletarian revolution and socialism. More and more workers and youth are experiencing this in their daily life."

Chris Marsden noted the concern expressed by the *Guardian* that a "decade of austerity" had "opened up a debate about the divisions in British society; since 2016 the emotional pitch of arguments has been raised to an intensity not seen before..."

Other leading publications were warning that "social and political tensions are at fever pitch and that the essential framework of democracy is breaking down as a result."

The SEP understood that the immense political tensions in the UK were rooted in "an historically unprecedented social polarisation between the classes that is now beginning to find expression in a global eruption of the class struggle."

He noted the howl of outrage in the media when Labour MP Lloyd Russell-Moyle said on radio that "I don't think anyone in this country

should be a billionaire" and how Corbyn "went into damage limitation mode, telling the BBC's Andrew Neill that there was 'no reason' for billionaires to flee the UK if Labour comes to power...."

"These parasites continue to suck on the blood of the working class," with research by the Equality Trust revealing that "the UK's six richest billionaires have plundered social wealth to the tune of £39.4 billion—and it is probably more—which is equal to the assets of around 13.2 million UK workers. In contrast, 14 million people live in poverty, 4 million more than 50 percent below the poverty line and 1.5 million are destitute."

Corbyn has indeed "bent over backwards to reassure the ruling class that the billionaires have nothing to fear from Labour ... Yet the ruling class has declared him unfit to be prime minister amid a CIA-led destabilisation campaign centred on anti-Semitism allegations that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described candidly as 'push back', aimed at making sure Corbyn never forms a government."

The real target, Marsden explained, is "the threat from below posed by the working class."

"The Socialist Equality Party base our perspective on the escalating class struggle now erupting in country after country—after decades in which it was suppressed by the labour and trade union bureaucracy.

"Everywhere the morbid growth of social inequality is the driving force for a new period of revolutionary struggle ... The Socialist Equality Party has spent the past four years since Corbyn came to lead the Labour Party opposing a sustained effort by Britain's pseudo-left groups to claim a renewal of the Labour Party and a fresh chance to implement an old-style national reformist policy.

"We confronted the same issue of illusions in national development regarding Brexit, where the same tendencies boosting Corbyn—the Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party—claimed that Brexit would provide the basis for a left Labour government, free from the constraints of the EU and the global capitalist market.

"Our fight is for workers to base themselves on a socialist and internationalist perspective, one rooted in a profound concern for history and informed by its lessons ... We base ourselves not on the illusions cultivated in a supposed new 'British road to socialism' under Corbyn, but the realities of the world crisis of capitalism and the inevitability of an eruption of the global class struggle.

"We have oriented to the most advanced elements in the working class and among the younger generation to resolve what Leon Trotsky identified as the fundamental question of the epoch—the crisis of revolutionary leadership."

Whatever the outcome of Thursday's general election, December 12 will mark a new stage in political life in the UK.

"If Corbyn fails to secure a majority, or we have another hung parliament, then the Tories will lead a social and political offensive against the working class of unbridled ferocity amid a deepening crisis of rule over Brexit policy..."

"If Pompeo's 'push back' fails to prevent Labour coming to power, then Labour will be told to do what is necessary and implement the dictates of the major corporations and the City of London. And Corbyn will do his best to oblige. It will painfully expose all illusions in the great hope of the 'left.'

"At the same time the Blairites will move to split the party and create the basis for a political realignment to the right—as they have been preparing for months under Corbyn's nose."

More was planned than parliamentary dirty tricks, with leading representatives of the armed forces and the security services declaring that a Corbyn government was a threat to national security and warning of a "mutiny."

"The British ruling class is preparing for counterrevolutionary violence against the working class, not a new period of social peace and 'national unity' under Labour. ... Workers will, sooner rather than later, be forced to

fight back, joining the movement now unfolding across the world. They will look for a party that is ready to fight and has the answers they need.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact