

“Socialism is more popular today than ever”: SGP candidate Christoph Vandreier appears on German public television and in an online interview

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“We are the Socialist Equality Party, Fourth International, and we are standing to give the widespread opposition to the right-wing politics of all parliamentary parties a voice and a socialist perspective.” With this statement, SGP Deputy Chairman Christoph Vandreier began the presentation of his party in an election broadcast on German public television on September 13.

The broadcast on the 33 parties that are not yet represented in the federal parliament (Bundestag), was significantly condensed by the public broadcaster compared to the last election and is being broadcast late at night. Each party is only introduced for two to three minutes.

Although the private production company cut almost two hours of footage down to two minutes, the SGP’s contribution (from minute 33) stands out from all the right-wing, confused or single-issue parties in the show. “We are not trying to alleviate the symptoms of a sick system, but instead advocate the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist society,” explains Vandreier at the beginning of the segment.

The SGP’s lead candidate made clear that the Trotskyist movement has a long history, commenting, “Our world party was founded in 1938 as the Fourth International because it defended the socialist principles against Stalinism and against social democracy.”

Speaking to a random passer-by, Vandreier points out that the unions have long stopped speaking in the interests of the working population. “The SGP supports every industrial action,” he explains, “and every initiative by workers who oppose wage cuts and miserable conditions.” In response to the objection of his counterpart, “I could go to the Verdi trade union for that

too,” Vandreier responded: “But that is exactly the problem. Verdi does not represent the interests of the workers.”

Then Vandreier speaks to a woman who introduces herself as a “self-employed cultural creator.” When asked by her about the character of the working class, he explains that the vast majority of the population consists of workers who “have to sell their labour in order to be able to live.”

The SGP is fighting for an unconditional basic income, explains Vandreier. In response to the objection of his interlocutor that she thinks it is good, but that it cannot be financed, Vandreier replies, “In order to enforce each of these demands, capitalism must be overthrown.” The SGP fights for a socialist society “focused on the needs of the people and not profit interests.”

But the format of the broadcast did not allow the issues to be dealt with in more detail. Vandreier’s detailed remarks on the coronavirus pandemic and the “Profits before life” policy were reduced to the following sentence: “In the last year and a half, we have seen a policy implemented in the interests of the rich.”

The SGP’s positions are more clearly expressed in another interview that Vandreier gave to the private online magazine MG.tv (massengesmack.tv) in August. Journalist Holger Kreymeier conducted an interview lasting almost an hour and a half, and titled, “We need a revolution.” In this interview, which is part of the “Veto” series, only a preview of which is freely accessible, the party’s positions that were curtailed by the public broadcaster are presented with greater clarity.

It’s a strong case for socialism, and Vandreier speaks plainly about the central issues of the election. In

particular, he justifies the SGP's struggle against war and fascism and for social equality. He also outlines the party's international strategy to end the pandemic.

He explains the SGP's strategy of eradication, saying, "The pandemic could have been brought under control very early and the virus wiped out through a global, courageous intervention ... In the vast majority of countries, profits were given priority over the lives of the people." The result is the disastrous fourth wave of the Delta variant. What is now necessary is a global hard lockdown, and at the same time those who suffer from loss of wages must be fully compensated.

Asked how that should be financed in view of the "great economic damage caused by the pandemic," Vandreier replied, "What economic damage are we talking about? While the majority of the population is really suffering today, the profit-before-life policy of the ECB and the federal government has enabled banks and corporations to enrich themselves with hundreds of billions of euros." He continued, "No worker should be made redundant because of the pandemic. Instead, the rich must be made to pay."

At the beginning of the interview, Kreymeier asks whether the deputy chairman of the Socialist Equality Party is often confronted with the statement: "Socialism—we already had that, it didn't work." Vandreier counters, "Firstly there are very few people who say that." The polls show that "Socialism is more popular today than ever. A growing majority, especially the young, prefer it to capitalism because they see what it has to offer them: death from the pandemic, a profit-before-life policy, unemployment and ever lower wages."

Vandreier maintains this steadfast tone in his responses to all the questions. Stalinism in the GDR (East Germany) and the Soviet Union, he explains, "had nothing to do with socialism." Socialism is "always internationalist," he continues, and "socialism is based on workers' democracy and the independent mobilization of the working class." Additionally, socialism is "a process in which the workers empower themselves," and therefore the concrete historical development of the future cannot be determined in advance. However, it is important to stress, "We reject the whole profit system in which all wealth is concentrated at the top because the means of production are privately owned."

The moderator then focuses particularly on the topic of German military missions, asking, "The SGP demands the immediate termination of all war and foreign missions—but we can see in Afghanistan what this will

lead to." Vandreier replied, "All the suffering in Afghanistan is the product of 20 years of intervention. The collapse of the Afghan army shows that these 20 years have only brought suffering, oppression and colonization to the country." The bankruptcy of the brutal war of conquest has been shown for everyone to see, Vandreier stressed. He made a point of mentioning the Kunduz massacre, for which the German army was specifically responsible.

"No problem in Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali or any country in the world is solved by imperialist troops; no problem; in no way!" insists Vandreier. Citing Karl Liebknecht, Vandreier added, "The main enemy is in our own country." He affirmed, "We stand in this tradition. We are for the dissolution of the German army."

Within the scope of this article, it is impossible to go into all of the topics covered in the interview. Vandreier makes it very clear that all established parties, regardless of who wins the election, will continue the "profit-before-life" policy after September 26. Not a single problem can be solved within the national framework, he remarks. He sums up the quintessence of the SGP, saying, "We are building a party of the workers, that is the basic principle of the Fourth International."

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The program "The Story on Channel 1: The Dream of the Five Percent. On the way to the small parties" was broadcast on Friday, 17/09/21 at 11:30 p.m. on tagesschau24 and is also available in the ARD media library.



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