

Messages of condolence for Ernst Schwarz

25 January 2001

The German Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit) received the following messages paying tribute to Ernst Schwarz, who died unexpectedly at the age of 43 on January 13.

I am deeply saddened to hear of Comrade Ernst's untimely death. He was a splendid comrade—devoted to the working class and to the party. It is not a simple task to defend revolutionary principles within a reactionary and opportunist milieu such as that which exists within the German trade union organizations. But Ernst did precisely this for nearly two decades, never losing either his confidence in the political path he had chosen or his sense of humor.

My own contact with Ernst was all too limited—mainly at party and public meetings. But I enjoyed my discussions with him. He was determined to develop the audience for Marxism in the working class; and the questions he raised with me were invariably directed toward the realization of this goal.

Ernst's death came far too early. But we will honor his memory as a Marxist whose life and work embodied the finest revolutionary traditions of the German working class.

David North,

WSWS editorial board chairman

15 January 2001

We were shocked and extremely saddened to hear of the tragic death of comrade Ernst Schwarz. On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) we would like to extend our deepest condolences to comrade Ernst's family and to all his comrades in the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit.

Several of us had the privilege of meeting comrade Ernst in Germany during the early and mid-nineties and discussing with him the complex problems confronting steelworkers in Germany, as part of the experiences of the international working class.

In January 1998 he travelled to Sydney, as part of the PSG delegation to the International Summer School.

Many comrades recall his enthusiasm and eagerness to discuss and collaborate with his international co-thinkers throughout the course of the school. His attendance itself expressed the determination of the most advanced layers of workers to confront and tackle the profound crisis of perspective confronting the international workers movement and to embrace an alternative socialist outlook.

His untimely death, a terrible blow to his family, co-workers and friends, robs the party of an important fighter in the cause of world socialism.

With our warmest fraternal greetings,

Nick Beams and Linda Tenenbaum,

for the Socialist Equality Party (Australia)

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party I send our deepest condolences on the death of Comrade Ernst Schwartz. We were saddened and equally shocked to learn of the passing of this comrade, who was so relatively young and had so much more to contribute politically.

The fondest memories of Ernst for many American comrades, myself included, are from the 1991 Berlin conference organized by the International Committee to oppose imperialist war and colonialism. The conference took place after the barbaric war against Iraq and brought together workers and youth from all over the world.

Ernst enthusiastically welcomed the ICFI delegates to Berlin and would spend many hours explaining the history and problems of the German workers movement. He took the time to show delegates historical and cultural sites throughout Berlin and reviewed how the Social Democratic and Stalinist leaders betrayed the socialist aspirations of the German working class. During political discussions Ernst would become very animated, as he sought to get across the seriousness of the struggle to rebuild a socialist culture in the working class. It was evident that in every ounce of his bone and marrow this was a comrade deeply

committed to the cause of building a better world for mankind.

His life, while cut short by this tragedy, was not at all lived in vain. Other workers like him will take up the struggle for socialist internationalism in the next period. Our thoughts are with his family and other comrades in mourning the passing of this valuable member.

Helen Halyard,

on behalf of the Socialist Equality Party (US)

All the members of the Socialist Equality Party in Britain were shocked and deeply saddened by the sudden death of comrade Ernst Schwarz on January 13. Ernst was well known and highly regarded by us all as a committed internationalist and an implacable socialist opponent of the Stalinist and labour bureaucracies.

I recall with particular fondness Ernst's participation in the International Communist Party (the forerunner to the SEP) campaign during the 1992 general election. Ernst campaigned at many factories and workplaces in Sheffield, including some of the few remaining steel plants. Physically a "big bear" of a man, Ernst was no less fearsome when fighting for his political beliefs. I vividly remember how he would stride into the middle of a canteen and just begin speaking to the workers that were sitting around, eating their lunch and chatting.

Imagine the impact as, in his heavily accented English, Ernst calmly but insistently stressed the commonality of the problems facing workers across the globe and the need for an international strategy to combat them. "What is the difference between us?" he would ask his stunned audience. "I am a German worker, exploited by capitalists. You are British workers, also exploited by the capitalists. There is no difference between us."

Workers quickly warmed to him and on several occasions the resulting discussion lasted well past the official end of the dinner break. One discussion with council workers went on for over an hour, as Ernst explained how the influence of the Stalinised Communist Party had paved the way for Nazism in Germany—their theory of social fascism splitting the working class and enabling Hitler to come to power without a shot being fired.

Always vigorous and passionate about his beliefs, his natural inclination in politics, as in much else, was to "plunge straight in". But Ernst was never simply a

"militant". He understood the centrality of the fight for socialist consciousness and responded enthusiastically to the decision by the International Committee of the Fourth International to launch the *World Socialist Web Site*, seeking to play his own role in the development of this important initiative. Ernst did not find it easy to become a writer, but applied himself to this task with the same determination that he brought to every political task he took on. Ernst felt keenly the importance of Rosa Luxemburg's observation (citing Ferdinand Lassalle before her) that "Only when science and the workers, these opposite poles of society, become one, will they crush in their arms of steel all obstacles to culture." Luxemburg added, "The entire strength of the modern labour movement rests on theoretical knowledge."

Finally comrades, we remember Ernst also as a gentle, considerate and selfless man. It is truly the cruellest of ironies that this big-hearted individual was brought down by a massive heart attack. He will be greatly missed but always remembered.

Please extend our deepest condolences to his wife and daughter.

Julie Hyland,

on behalf of the Socialist Equality Party (Britain)



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