

50 Years of the International Committee of the Fourth International

Public meetings of the Socialist Equality Party of Britain and the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit of Germany

1 November 2003

Speakers:

Peter Schwarz, secretary of the ICFI

Chris Marsden, national secretary of the SEP (Britain)

Frankfurt

Sunday November 23, 4 p.m.

Haus der Jugend (Kleiner Saal)

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Sunday November 30, 2 p.m.

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The Socialist Equality Parties in Germany and Britain are holding public meetings to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International, publisher of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The ICFI was formed to defend the programmatic foundations of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938 to take forward the struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, which had usurped power in the world's first workers' state and rejected the perspective of international socialism in favour of building "socialism in a single country." What this meant in practice was the abandonment of the struggle

for socialism in any form by a bureaucratic elite that sought to defend its relative privileges through the ruthless suppression of the democratic rights of the working class.

In the face of massive political persecution, the Left Opposition and later the Fourth International fought against Stalinism and for the construction of a new internationalist and socialist leadership—the necessity of which was tragically confirmed by the horrors of the Second World War.

In the aftermath of the war, however, an opportunist tendency emerged within the Fourth International that reacted impressionistically to the apparent stabilisation of capitalism and the advances made by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. Under the leadership of Michel Pablo, the Pabloites rejected the possibility of the construction of an independent revolutionary leadership in the working class. They argued that the state nationalisations carried out in Eastern Europe—and later in China—proved that under the pressure of its conflict with imperialism the Soviet bureaucracy would be forced to carry out revolutionary acts, initiating a process of self-reform that would supposedly vindicate Trotsky's struggle for a political revolution against Stalinism by unforeseen means.

In those countries dominated by social democratic reformist parties, the Pabloites argued that the pressure exerted by the masses could force them to implement socialist policies; while in the semi-colonial countries, the same role was assigned to the bourgeois nationalist movements.

The ICFI emerged in the political struggle against this wholesale adaptation to non-socialist tendencies by the

orthodox Trotskyists, who rallied to the appeal by James P. Cannon and the Socialist Workers Party in the United States contained in the Open Letter of 1953. This insisted on the counter-revolutionary character of Stalinism and the essential task of constructing the Fourth International as the Marxist leadership of the international working class.

What has the past half century revealed of the perspective advanced by the Pabloites?

In the East, far from presiding over “centuries of deformed workers states” as Pablo predicted, the final counter-revolutionary act of Stalin’s heirs was to liquidate the Soviet Union and restore capitalist property relations throughout Eastern Europe. In the West, every effort to nudge the social democratic parties in a leftward direction has failed. Rather, Tony Blair’s New Labour Party in Britain and Schröder’s Social Democrats have abandoned their old reformist programmes and now advance policies once associated with the conservative right. And in the semicolonial countries, the nationalist movements glorified by the Pabloites as a “blunt instrument” through which the working class could come to power have instead bowed to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund by slashing social spending and implementing wholesale privatisations.

Never has the need for a new leadership in the working class been so apparent as today, when all the old leaderships have so clearly failed. This has left millions without any political means of opposing the eruption of US militarism and the reimposition of a new form of colonial rule, placing an absolute premium on the education of workers, youth and intellectuals in the lessons to be drawn from the struggle waged by the ICFI against Stalinism, social democracy, bourgeois nationalism and their political apologists. The *World Socialist Web Site* urges all our readers to attend the 50th anniversary meetings in Frankfurt and London, and take an active part in the discussion of these fundamental issues.



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