

The Historical Foundations of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit

Part eight

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The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party) of Germany held its Founding Congress May 22-24, 2010, in Berlin. The Congress adopted the document “The Historical Foundations of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit” on May 23.

We are publishing the document in serialized form. Below is the eighth of eleven parts.

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XX. The founding of the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter

147. In the 1960s, the postwar boom began to show clear signs of crisis. Europe and Japan emerged as economic rivals of American capitalism, and the US dollar came under increasing pressure. In 1966, a recession shook the world economy. In 1971, the US administration severed the link between gold and the dollar, thereby removing the ground from under the currency system that underpinned the postwar boom. In 1973, the world economy again fell into deep recession. The working class reacted to the deepening crisis with an international offensive that reached revolutionary dimensions (France 1968), shook the Stalinist regimes (Czechoslovakia 1969), forced the resignation of conservative governments (Great Britain 1974), led to the fall of dictatorships (Greece 1974, Portugal 1974, Spain 1975) and sealed the American defeat in Vietnam. In 1968, student revolts, attracting large sections of the younger generation, erupted in Germany, France, Italy, the US, Japan, Mexico and many other countries. The historic crisis of proletarian leadership remained, however, unresolved. The Stalinist, social democratic and trade union apparatuses disoriented and suppressed these mass struggles with the assistance of the Pabloite tendencies. They betrayed promising revolutionary opportunities and led them to defeat. The repercussions were particularly disastrous in Chile, where the government of the “Socialist” Allende, with the assistance of the Communist Party, prevented the working class from taking power until the military, led by General Augusto Pinochet, felt strong enough to take control of the situation. On September 11, 1973, Pinochet carried out a putsch, murdering thousands of workers as well as Allende himself. The inability of the working class to overcome the obstacles erected by its old organisations provided the bourgeoisie with the necessary time to stabilise and reorganise its fragile world order. Disappointment over the fact that the working class was not able to resolve the crisis in a revolutionary way was exploited by the bourgeoisie from 1975 onwards for its counter-offensive.

148. In Germany, the turning point in the class struggle was heralded by

a strike of metalworkers in Baden-Württemberg in 1963. The strikers not only demanded higher wages, but also passed resolutions against the planned Emergency Laws. Employers reacted by locking out hundreds of thousands of workers for the first time since 1928. In the Ruhr district, miners mobilised against pit closures. The coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals under Ludwig Erhard proved unable to impose budget cuts on the working class. In 1966, it was replaced by the Grand Coalition. For the first time since the end of the 1920s, the bourgeoisie felt compelled to include the Social Democrats in government in order to maintain control over the working class. Willy Brandt took over the office of foreign minister and vice-chancellor in a cabinet headed by Kurt Georg Kiesinger (CDU), a former Nazi Party member. The most important task of the Grand Coalition was to pass the Emergency Laws. In opposition to this, a broad extra-parliamentary movement emerged that coalesced, in 1967-1968, into a student revolt. In 1969, a wildcat strike wave erupted in the steel industry that temporarily got out of the control of the trade union bureaucracy.

149. The political elite reacted by replacing the Grand Coalition with the Small Coalition and placing Brandt at the head of government. The FDP, which had, until then, stood on the right of the political spectrum, switched sides, assuring the government of the necessary majority. The former SAP member Brandt brought the situation under control through far-reaching social concessions. Generous collective wage agreements were awarded to workers in both the private and public sectors. Young people “were brought off the streets” through a reform and education programme. The percentage of high school graduates rose from 5 percent of all young people in the 1960s, to 30 percent in the 1970s. The number of jobs for high school and college graduates at universities, research institutes, hospitals, schools, social institutions and public administration increased sharply. The influence of the SPD reached its peak in these years: in the 1972 federal election, it received 46 percent of the vote and had more than a million members. At the same time, Brandt ensured that those opposed to the bourgeois order were proscribed. The Radical Decree of 1972 placed restrictions on the employment of thousands of professionals in the public service on the basis of “doubts” as to their loyalty to “the free democratic basic order”. This exerted tremendous pressure to forswear anti-capitalist objectives and adapt to the status quo.

150. Brandt also provided an important service to the ruling elite in the area of foreign policy. He improved political and economic relations with Eastern Europe and terminated the blockade against East Germany. His Eastern Policy, which at first met with strong resistance in conservative circles, provided access to urgently required new markets in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, helping German business overcome the effects of the recession. Over the long term, the Eastern policy undermined the stability of the Eastern European regimes.

151. Against the backdrop of the class struggle offensive, the

perspective of the International Committee found support in Germany. On September 18-19, 1971, a number of young workers and students founded the BSA in Hanover and were recognised by the International Committee as its German section. The resumption of the historical continuity of Trotskyism in Germany posed an enormous political and theoretical challenge. The betrayal of two mass parties, and the disasters that had resulted, had left deep traces in the consciousness of the German working class—as had the centrist inheritance of the USPD and SAP, the crimes of Stalinism, and the revival of Social-Democratic reformism. In addition, intellectual and cultural life was shaped by the anti-Marxist theories of the student movement. These challenges could not be resolved by tactical and organisational initiatives alone, no matter how correct these were in themselves. The building of a section of the International Committee in Germany required systematic programmatic, historical and theoretical work. Such a task was made more difficult by the growing opportunistic tendencies within the International Committee. The French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) had already turned away from the fight against Pabloism in the 1960s, and broke with the International Committee in 1971. The British section, which, due to its history, enjoyed pre-eminent political authority, went the same way in the 1970s. These developments placed major obstacles in the BSA's way, pushing it into an opportunist direction. The BSA resisted this pressure, but it was only the split with the WRP, in the winter of 1985-1986, that enabled it to comprehensively assimilate the theoretical and political inheritance of the Fourth International.

XXI. The conflict with the OCI and the fraction fight in the IAK

152. The BSA emerged out of a Marxist minority faction within the Gruppe Internationale Arbeiterkorrespondenz (IAK), which had developed from an initiative of the French OCI and had worked closely with it. In 1963, the OCI had sent a delegation to Germany to discuss the political lessons of the metal workers' strike in Baden-Württemberg. The OCI representatives identified themselves clearly as Trotskyists, translating and circulating the Transitional Programme and organising discussions on Trotsky's writings. They were in contact with a variety of people, including social democrats seeking a left image, such as Hans Matthöfer, later to become a federal minister, and foreign policy expert Karsten Voigt; radicalised political science and sociology students; but also workers, students and apprentices who were seriously looking for an alternative to social democracy and Stalinism. One of this group was an 18-year-old engineering apprentice, Ulrich Rippert, who joined the IAK in Frankfurt in 1969. Rippert is today chairman of the PSG. From the summer of 1965, a group of political science and sociology students from the Frankfurt Fetscher-Seminar, who were in close contact with the OCI, published a journal called *International Worker Correspondence* (IAK). At the end of the 1960s, they were joined by a student group from Bochum.

153. At this time, the OCI was still a section of the International Committee but was increasingly distancing itself politically. In the fight against the reunification of the SWP with the Pabloites in 1963, the OCI had played only a subordinate role, leaving the debate to the SLL. In 1966, at the Third World Congress of the International Committee, the OCI supported a motion from the SLL that affirmed that the Fourth International had successfully repelled the efforts of the revisionists to destroy it. However, less than a year later, the OCI declared that the International Committee was “not the leadership of the Fourth International”, which had been destroyed “under the pressure of hostile class forces” and had to be rebuilt. 82 “Reconstruction of the Fourth

International” became the slogan with which the OCI distanced itself from the programmatic principles defended by the International Committee against Pabloism. This was rejected by the British SLL: “The future of the Fourth International is represented in the stored-up hatred and experience of millions of workers for the Stalinists and reformists which betray their struggles.... Only the struggle against revisionism can prepare the cadres to take the leadership of the millions of workers drawn into the struggle against capitalism and against the bureaucracy.... The living struggle against Pabloism and the training of cadres and parties on the basis of this fight was the life of the Fourth International since 1952.” 83

154. The SLL warned the OCI of the consequences of its scepticism towards the International Committee: “Now the radicalisation of the workers in Western Europe is proceeding rapidly, particularly in France.... There is *always* a danger at such a stage of development that a revolutionary party responds to the situation in the working class not in a revolutionary way, but by adaptation to the level of struggle to which the workers are restricted by their own experience under the old leadership, i.e. to the inevitable initial confusion. Such revisions of the fight for the independent Party and the Transitional Programme are usually dressed up in the disguise of getting closer to the working class, unity with all those in struggle, not poisoning ultimatums, abandoning dogmatism, etc.” 84

155. This warning was to be confirmed in 1968. As the student revolt and the general strike led France to the edge of a revolution, the OCI reacted in a centrist, not a revolutionary manner. It did not challenge the leadership of the Stalinists, who ultimately strangled the general strike. Their programme was limited to demands for the unity of the mutually hostile trade union federations and for “a central strike committee”, without connecting this to socialist demands. It systematically avoided the question of political power, even as workers called for a “popular government” and President de Gaulle fled abroad. The OCI never placed demands on the French Communist Party and the trade union CGT to form a government. A systematic agitation in this direction would have intensified the conflict between the workers and the Stalinists and strongly undermined their credibility.

156. Under the pressure of thousands of new members, who streamed into the party in 1968, the OCI moved sharply to the right in ensuing years and ended up being taken in tow by the Socialist Party. In 1971, the Socialist Party's leadership was taken over by François Mitterrand, a bourgeois politician who had begun his political career under the Vichy regime and served in the Fourth Republic as a Minister of the Interior and Law. Mitterrand developed a political mechanism that permitted the French bourgeoisie to overcome the crisis of 1968 and to secure its rule in the decades that followed—the Alliance of the Left”, in which he included the French Communist Party. After Mitterrand's election to the presidency in 1981, the Alliance of the Left took office, and with a few interruptions, led the government for the next 21 years. The OCI supported Mitterrand, celebrated the Alliance of the Left as the realisation “of the workers united front” and in 1971 sent numerous members into the Socialist Party. One of them, Lionel Jospin, worked closely with Mitterrand and finally became French prime minister in 1997. On the international level, the OCI formed a bloc with centrist organisations against the International Committee. In Bolivia, it defended the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) of Guillermo Lora, a Pabloite organisation, which placed confidence in the Stalinists and the “left” military regime of Juan José Torres, and so paved the way for the bloody military dictatorship of Hugo Banzer.

157. The rightward movement of the OCI resulted in fierce conflicts within the IAK. Initially, the IAK had distanced itself clearly from the SPD and the trade union bureaucracy. In the student movement—in contrast to the Stalinist and anarchist currents of the SDS—it fought for an orientation to the working class and stressed that this was possible only in the fight against social democracy and the trade union bureaucracy. Thus,

it explained in 1968: “The workers’ bureaucracies help the ruling class in their task of isolating the struggle of the students. Only in the struggle against these bureaucracies can students make links to the struggles of the working class, by taking part in the fight for the building of the revolutionary organisations of the proletariat.” 85

158. But shortly before Willy Brandt became chancellor in 1969, the IAK changed its position. The entire group joined the SPD and stated that one could establish a workers’ government with the help of this party: “The demand placed on the SPD for a workers’ government is not only a tactic to expose it. We assume rather that the intensification of the class struggle will force the apparatuses to break more completely with the bourgeoisie than they originally intended on the basis of their counter-revolutionary ideology. So a social-democratic workers’ government is quite possible, i.e. it is possible when the control of social-democracy over the working masses can only be maintained by a social-democratic government carrying out policies which limit the power of individual capitalists or groups of capitalists.” 86 This was a classic Pabloite formulation: The way to workers’ power was not through the independent mobilisation of the working class under the banner of the Fourth International; the same goal could be achieved through the SPD, if the working class exerted appropriate pressure on it.

159. The IAK expressly rejected the fight for a socialist perspective within the SPD. Instead, it limited itself to trade union demands, which it termed “transitional demands”: “As the masses take up transitional demands in the first stage of their mobilisation without being conscious of the fight for the conquest of power, so we develop an organisation around the *Social-Democratic Worker* without demanding that the workers join the Fourth International and accept its full programme. We are, however, always ready to openly fight for its full programme. The tendency and, at a later point, organisation to be built around the *Social-Democratic Worker* is not based on the programme of the Fourth International.” 87 While the bourgeoisie depended on Willy Brandt to contain the offensive of the working class and youth, the IAK subordinated itself to the SPD and provided it with a left cover.

160. The IAK also developed a political formula to support Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*. It had originally called for the reunification of Germany by the working class on a socialist basis, but from 1969 onwards it called for immediate reunification without any preconditions. In the first issue of its fraction paper in the SPD, it stated in the spring of 1971, that “the entire German working class” had given the task to Willy Brandt to stand up for “national self-determination” and “immediate reunification”. 88 It thus justified the penetration of German capital into Eastern Europe, the core of Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, and substituted the left opposition to Stalinism with the right-wing anti-communism of the SPD. Twenty years later, when the SED regime collapsed and Willy Brandt stood beside Helmut Kohl to push for German unity, the successors of the IAK used openly anti-communist language, characterising the GDR as a “prison for 17-18 million German women, men and children”, while celebrating the fall of the wall as a triumph “of the German people (*Volk*)”, who could “now finally jointly celebrate its unity.” 89

161. In close cooperation with the British SLL, a Marxist minority fraction was formed in 1970 against this rightward course. It founded the BSA one year later. The minority rejected subordination to the SPD. In its founding manifesto, the BSA affirmed its irreconcilable opposition to the social-democratic bureaucracy and the need to develop an independent revolutionary party: “The working class faces the danger of entering into revolutionary struggles without a clear consciousness of the real perspective of capitalism and with illusions in the cowardly class compromise policies of the old leaderships.... Each struggle against the Concerted Action and wage policies of the government, against the new industrial relations legislation, against rationalisation measures and the closure of factories, against short-time work and unemployment, against

high rents and against cuts to public services must be concentrated on the building of an alternative leadership of the working class.”

162. The fraction fight within the IAK intensified rapidly in 1971. At a summer school in Fallingb., near Hanover, in which representatives of the SLL and the American Workers League participated, fierce disputes erupted over Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* The IAK majority designated Lenin’s view, that socialism had to be brought into the working class from outside, as “outright idealism” and put forward a spontaneous conception. The task of Marxists was to unite all spontaneous struggles. This was the essence of “the strategy of the united workers’ front”. From the spontaneous struggles, natural organisers of the working class would develop. It was necessary to build committees and forms of action where these natural organisers could rally and, on the basis of their own experiences, develop into Marxists. The minority declared war on these conceptions. In a letter, “On the meaning of the minority fraction,” it wrote: “The principled fight against the petit bourgeois mixture of radical protest and opportunist adaptation to the interests of the traitorous trade union bureaucracies, embodied in the leadership of the IAK, is at its core a fight against an entire tendency in our society that prevents the working class and youth from finding their way to Marxism. This tendency comprises numerous independent groups and tendencies in the SPD (Jusos) and trade unions. The theoretical and political fight against these tendencies, born and nourished from the petit bourgeois student movement, is indispensable for the development of Marxism in Germany.” 90

163. In 1971, the OCI openly opposed the International Committee. In July, it organised an international youth meeting in Essen, to which it invited centrist and openly right-wing organisations. Together with them, it opposed an SLL motion that affirmed the historical continuity of the International Committee and stated that there existed no revolutionary parties outside the Fourth International. One month later, the military in Bolivia carried out a putsch. When the Workers League and the SLL published a critique of Lora’s POR, which shared responsibility for this disaster, they were publicly attacked by the OCI and accused of capitulating to imperialism. In September, the Marxist minority of the IAK founded the BSA, and a month later the majority of the International Committee announced its split with the OCI.

XXII. The BSA under the influence of the WRP

164. In contrast to the enormous patience and tenacity with which it had conducted the conflict with the SWP in 1963, the SLL made little effort to clarify the political questions that had led to the split with the OCI in 1971. The split was carried out in great haste and without detailed discussion in the International Committee and in the membership of the sections. The SLL made no serious attempt to develop a faction within the OCI. Instead, the split resembled a mutually agreed divorce. From the point of view of the education and clarification of the cadre, the split was “decidedly premature”, as the International Committee determined later in an analysis of the WRP’s collapse. “It represented a retreat by the Socialist Labour League from the international responsibilities it had assumed in 1961 when it took up the fight against the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party.” 91

165. The SLL later justified its avoidance of clarifying programmatic questions with the claim that the political differences with the OCI were only a by-product of philosophical differences. The split was not a question “of political positions on various questions”, but went “to the foundations of the Fourth International—Marxist theory”. The SLL had learned “from the experience of building the revolutionary party in Britain

that a thoroughgoing and difficult struggle against idealistic ways of thinking was necessary which went much deeper than questions of agreement on programme and policy.” 92 Thus, the SLL twisted the statement—correct by itself—that philosophical method is manifested in political analysis, and substituted a concrete investigation of political questions with an abstract discussion of philosophical problems. Trotsky, on the contrary, had always insisted that the significance of the party lay in its programme, which had, as its content, “a common understanding of the events, of the tasks”. 93 When he raised the question of dialectical materialism in the conflict with Burnham and Shachtman in 1939-1940, Trotsky did so in direct connection with issues of political perspective.

166. This lack of interest in the clarification of political questions was closely bound up with the organisational successes the SLL had made as a result of its struggle against opportunism in Great Britain. In 1963, the SLL assumed the leadership of the youth organisation of the Labour Party, the Young Socialists, and following its expulsion from the Labour Party, established the YS as its own youth organisation. In 1969, after a five-year campaign, the SLL launched its daily paper, *Workers Press*, which won a large audience among workers, intellectuals and artists and brought hundreds of new members into the party. This inflow of new forces made more urgent the task of clarifying the fundamental political principles that differentiated the International Committee from petty-bourgeois opportunism. Only in this way would the new membership be politically educated to withstand the pressure of hostile class forces. Instead, the SLL adapted to the spontaneous upsurge of the working class in Britain. “But the conviction gradually took hold within the SLL leadership that the material growth of the British section, rather than the strengthening of its international political line, was the decisive precondition and essential foundation for the development of the International Committee; and from this flowed an incorrect and increasingly nationalist conception of the relations between the SLL and the International Committee of the Fourth International. The SLL proceeded from an increasingly organisational conception which held that the practical successes of the Socialist Labour League in Britain were the prerequisite for the further development of the world Trotskyist movement.” 94

167. The lack of clarification of the issues that had led to the split with the OCI constituted a heavy burden for the young German section. Its cadre was only superficially familiar with the lessons that the International Committee had drawn from its long political struggle against opportunism. The SLL did not encourage the BSA to turn to these programmatic and historical questions. The International Committee admitted the BSA as a section without requiring it to submit its own perspectives document. Instead, the SLL placed the emphasis on the practical side of party building—on recruitment campaigns, the publication of a newspaper, which appeared fortnightly from February 1972 as *Der Funke* and weekly from October 1976 as *Neue Arbeiterpresse*, and the building of a youth organisation.

168. The BSA grew rapidly in its first year. The Federal Republic was shaken by a series of social and political eruptions. In April 1972, the CDU-CSU tried to oust the Brandt government with a no-confidence vote that provoked strong resistance. Factory workers followed the debates in federal parliament and prepared a general strike in defence of the Brandt government. Sales and distribution of *Der Funke* and the BSA’s leaflets shot up. In the following federal election campaign, in which the SPD obtained the best result in its history, new branches of the BSA and its youth organisation Sozialistischer Jugendbund (SJB) were developed in more than 20 cities and suburbs.

169. The BSA called for “an SPD government, pledged to socialist policies”. It called for a vote for the SPD, while advancing at the same time its own socialist programme, and demanded that the SPD break with the FDP and adopt a programme in the interests of the working class. This tactic was based on the fact that large sections of workers still held

illusions in the SPD. The tactic aimed to expose the real role of the SPD to workers, based on their own experiences. It was anchored in the experiences of the SLL, which had, in the 1960s, effectively intervened into the Labour Party with the demand “Labour to power on socialist policies,” and on the Transitional Programme, which characterised “the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: ‘Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!’ ” as “an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character” of the reformist and centrist organisations. 95 However, to the extent that this tactic was not linked to a well-thought-out revolutionary strategy, it exposed the party to the danger of swimming with the tide of opposition to the conservatives, and of being unprepared for the political challenges resulting from an election victory for the Social Democrats.

170. The British SLL succumbed to precisely this danger when it founded the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1973. The WRP based itself on a programme whose “content and underlying conception had nothing whatsoever to do with Trotskyism” and that did not go beyond the boundaries of centrism. 96 The main task of the new party consisted, according to its own declarations, of uniting “the working class behind a socialist programme to throw out the Tory government and replace it with a Labour government.” The SLL based itself on widespread sentiment against the Tory government of Edward Heath, and expected that the return of a Labour government would quickly bring it into conflict with the working class, thereby opening up new revolutionary possibilities. Reality turned out to be more complicated, however. IMF credits provided the Labour government with room for manoeuvre. The WRP faced a deep crisis; many new members, won on the crest of an anti-Tory wave, turned away from the party. Under such conditions, neglect of the clarification of international programmatic questions avenged itself.

171. The German section faced similar problems. After the triumph of 1972, Brandt was unable to dampen the expectations created in the election campaign. In the winter of 1973-1974, 12 million workers took part in wage conflicts. In the middle of the international oil crisis, public servants enforced an 11 percent wage increase. The SPD leadership and the FDP responded by engaging in a plot to dump Brandt. They utilised the unmasking of a GDR spy close to Brandt in order to force his resignation and his replacement by Helmut Schmidt. Schmidt, in close cooperation with the trade union bureaucracy, immediately proceeded against the working class, introducing austerity measures. This rightward turn of social democracy, which took similar forms in Britain, France, Italy and other countries, was the prelude to a counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie that has continued to this day. In 1979, Margaret Thatcher was elected head of government in Britain; Ronald Reagan became president of the US in 1980. Both began an open confrontation with the working class and were successful, due to the betrayal of the trade unions. Since then, the living standards of the lower- and middle-income brackets have stagnated and sunk, while incomes at the top have exploded.

172. In the BSA, the SPD’s change of course produced a crisis. Many members, who had regarded the BSA as a kind of pressure group and hoped for a continued left-wing development by the SPD, turned their backs on the party. The crisis worsened when IC Secretary Cliff Slaughter came to Germany in May 1974 and insisted on a new political line. Slaughter argued that the Schmidt government would quickly come into conflict with the working class, and that the BSA must demand its ousting and the immediate calling of fresh elections. This was a break from the past line, which had taken into account the social-democratic illusions of many workers. Instead of intensifying the conflict between these workers and the SPD leaders, the new line meant an adaptation to petty-bourgeois tendencies that rejected a patient fight in the working class, which had defended the SPD government against a no-confidence vote just two years before. The demand for new elections meant that a settling of accounts with the SPD was no longer seen as the task of the working class, but of

the electorate as a whole. In all probability, this would have led to the return to power of the CDU-CSU. This political line cut the BSA off from workers and caused huge difficulties.

173. In Britain, a few months after the founding of the WRP, a miners' strike led to the fall of the Tory government and brought a Labour government under Harold Wilson to power. Within the British section, a major conflict erupted with Alan Thornett, the leader of the trade union wing of the WRP. Thornett spoke for those members who had regarded the WRP primarily as an instrument to return the Labour Party to power. He opposed the development of a more critical line towards the Labour Party and collaborated secretly with the French OCI. The WRP's failure to draw the political lessons from the split with the OCI now avenged itself. Rather than patiently clarifying the political differences, the WRP leaders expelled Thornett and lost a majority of its members who worked in the factories. When, in the summer of 1975, the Wilson government imposed a wage freeze, the WRP changed course and adopted the line it had previously forced upon the BSA: it called for the overthrow of the Labour government. That represented, as the International Committee later determined, "a fundamental programmatic break with the proletarian orientation for which the British Trotskyists had fought for decades. To call for the bringing down of a Labour government, under conditions in which the revolutionary party had not yet won the allegiance of any significant section of the working class, and in which the only alternative to Labour was a Tory government, which the working class had brought down little more than a year before, was the height of adventurism." 97 The new orientation was "a profoundly disturbing expression of the class shift that had taken place inside the leadership of the WRP.... A predominately petty-bourgeois leadership, upon whom Healy was now resting, had quickly become disillusioned with the Labour government and was impatient with the tempo of development in the political consciousness of the working class." 98 The WRP now turned—as the Pabloites had done two decades before—increasingly to non-proletarian forces: national liberation movements, national regimes in the Middle East, and sections of the trade union and labour bureaucracy, until finally rejecting its own history and openly breaking with Trotskyism 10 years later.

174. The WRP exerted increasing pressure on the German section to proceed in the same direction. Between 1977 and 1983, it organised a number of youth marches across Europe that absorbed a large part of the BSA's resources and energies. Gerry Healy represented these marches as a turn to the working class; as a "new practice" aimed at overcoming the political and organisational crisis of the section. They were, in reality, a turn to the bureaucratic apparatuses. Programmatically, the marches did not go beyond the demand for jobs for unemployed youth. Even the Marx march from Trier to London, to commemorate the centenary of the death of the founder of scientific socialism, was organised in such a way that it did not offend Stalinists and left social democrats. From the point of view of cadre development, the marches were a school of opportunism. The marches had to maintain close relations with the bureaucratic apparatuses because they could not remain on the road without their material support. That excluded from the outset a political conflict or the open advocacy of Trotskyism. In countries such as Germany, where the trade unions and SPD reacted with icy enmity, the marches were dependent on humiliating handouts from the churches. Later, an International Committee inquiry found out that Healy had also used the marches to bolster his credentials with nationalist leaders in the Middle East.

175. When a broad peace movement developed around 1980, against the stationing of the nuclear medium-range Pershing II missiles on German soil, the WRP pressured the German section to adapt to this pacifist movement. In the event, the BSA participated in the peace marches, but not in the manner the WRP had planned. It printed a brochure containing the writings of Lenin and Trotsky against war and led a campaign against

the pacifism of the Stalinists, who politically dominated the peace movement.

176. On Healy's urging, the German section acquired an expensive printing press in 1979 in order to publish its own daily paper. At the time, the BSA lacked the political support and material resources necessary for the realisation of such a project. A daily paper would have been feasible only if it had become the platform of an accumulation of trade union bureaucrats, pacifists, Greens and petty-bourgeois radicals—which was probably Healy's secret intention. In fact, a new daily paper actually saw the light of day that year in Germany, the *taz*, which soon developed into the unofficial organ of the Greens and is still published today. When it became clear that the BSA rejected such an orientation and could not bear the cost of a daily paper from its own resources, the WRP's attacks took openly destructive forms. Under various pretexts, party leaders were expelled and the section was forced to make financial donations driving it to the edge of ruin. Only the cadres' loyalty to internationalist principles prevented a collapse of the section. At the same time, the American Workers League began to develop a thoroughgoing criticism of the opportunism of the WRP, which provided the basis for the re-orientation of the International Committee and its German section.

177. The political problems that confronted the Fourth International at this time had their roots in the stabilisation and expansion of capitalism after the Second World War, which had thoroughly altered class relations. In order to regulate the class struggle, the imperialists relied on a broad layer of petty-bourgeois elements, who formed the social basis for the growth of opportunism. The Pabloite revisionists reflected the social pressure that these layers exerted on the Fourth International. They developed the theoretical and political formulae that served to justify the subordination of the working class to the petty-bourgeois agents of imperialism. After the capitulation of the American SWP, the British SLL, and in particular Gerry Healy, undertook the responsibility of defending the programme of the Fourth International against this revisionist attack. While the Pabloites hailed Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Mao Zedong and left talkers in the trade union bureaucracy, the SLL defended the perspective of permanent revolution and fought for the political independence of the working class. In the 1970s, the influence of these petty-bourgeois layers reached its high point. When the WRP collapsed in 1985, the balance of power between revolutionary Marxism and opportunism had already fundamentally changed. That has been underscored by the enormous theoretical, political and organisational progress the International Committee has made since.

178. The importance of the BSA in the 1970s was the fact that it resumed, in Germany, the historical thread that had been severed by the Pabloites. Regardless of the difficulties, weaknesses and errors it confronted, it avowed itself unreservedly to the perspective of the world socialist revolution. Trotsky's writings on National Socialism and his analysis of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism played a crucial role in the recruitment and education of the founding cadre. The BSA consistently opposed the Stalinists, Maoists and anarchist groups that emerged from the student movement, and the anti-Marxist theories that dominated in the universities. It opposed "the long march through the institutions" taken by the Jusos (Gerhard Schröder) "the Spontis" (Joschka Fischer), the Maoists (Antje Vollmer, Ulla Schmidt, Jürgen Trittin) and the Pabloites (Harald Wolf), who all ended up in the highest state and government offices. It also rejected the reactionary methods and perspectives of the Red Army Faction terrorists.

To be continued

NOTES:

82 Statement by the OCI, May 1967 in *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, Volume 5, London 1975, p.91-92

83 *Reply to the OCI by the Central Committee of the SLL, June 19, 1967*, in *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, Volume 5, London 1975, p.107,

84 Ibid. p. 113-114

85 Adresse der IAK an die außerordentliche Delegierten-Konferenz des SDS, March 1968, in the pamphlet *Der Kampf der Studenten und die Rolle des SDS*

86 IAK No. 28. March 1970

87 Internes IAK-Bulletin March 1971. *Sozialdemokratischer Arbeiter (Social-Democratic Worker)* was the name originally planned for the paper issued by the IAK inside the SPD. But finally it appeared under the name *Sozialistische Arbeiterpolitik - Organ für eine Arbeiterpolitik in der SPD (Socialist Workers' Policies - Organ for Workers' Policies inside the SPD)*.

88 *Wer wir sind und was wir wollen*, in *Sozialistische Arbeiterpolitik - Organ für eine Arbeiterpolitik in der SPD*, 1. Mai 1971

89 *Manifesto of the Vereinigung der Arbeitskreise für Arbeitnehmerpolitik und Demokratie im vereinten Deutschland (VAA)* for the 1990 Federal Election, quoted in *Das Ende der DDR*, Arbeiterpresse Verlag, S. 447

90 Letter *Über den Sinn der Minderheitsfraktion*, 26. Mai 1971

91 ICFI, *How the Workers Revolutionary Party Betrayed Trotskyism 1973 - 1985*, http://www.wsws.org/IML/fi_vol13_no1/fi_vol13_no1_full.shtml#anchor3

92 *Statement by the International Committee (Majority)*, March 1 1972 in *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, Volume 6, London 1975, p.72, 78, 83

93 Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder, p.171

94 David North, *Gerry Healy and his place in the history of the Fourth International*, Labor Publications 1991, p. 47

95 *The Transitional Program*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/tp-text2.htm#wg>

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97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.



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