

Twenty years since the reunification of Germany

2 October 2010

Sunday, October 3 marks the 20th anniversary of the reunification of Germany. On October 3, 1990 the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist and the new eastern states joined—as it was termed at the time—the constitutional territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Since then Germany has changed in a way which few would have imagined. Germany's chancellor at that time, Helmut Kohl (CDU), promised “flourishing landscapes”. Instead widespread poverty and unemployment prevail. There are currently 6.7 million German citizens dependent on Hartz IV welfare payments, while another 5 million are employed in low-paid, “precarious” jobs. The country's one-time extensive pension and health care system has been systematically dismantled. Once again German soldiers are fighting and killing in Afghanistan and other parts of the world. Capitalism is in a deep crisis all over the globe.

In 1990, the Socialist Workers League (Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter, BSA)—the forerunner of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG), the Socialist Equality Party in Germany—had warned of the consequences of the reintroduction of capitalism and correctly predicted many of the developments that have since taken place. In a statement published on October 21, 1990, the BSA opposed the handing over of state nationalised property to private companies and the banks. In so doing the BSA made absolutely no concessions to the former Stalinist rulers of the GDR, who had paved the way for the process of reunification. Instead the BSA drew up a balance sheet of the decline of the GDR and drew out the necessity for an international, socialist program.

We are publishing here the text of this resolution.

Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter Central Committee Statement, October 21, 1990

Forty years after it was established, the German Democratic Republic reunified with West Germany on a capitalist basis. This statement analyzes the developments leading up to the federal parliamentary election held December 2, 1990 and puts forward the program on which the BSA ran candidates. The unification of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on October 3, 1990 marks an end to an important chapter in the history of the German and international working class. It requires the drawing of a political balance sheet not only of the last 12 months, but of a whole historical period.

Forty years after its establishment, the GDR virtually disappeared overnight without leaving a trace. The efforts and sacrifices made by two generations of workers who, following the collapse of the Nazi dictatorship, attempted to take a step towards overcoming capitalist exploitation, have seemingly been in vain. The very same trusts and banks which were ignominiously driven out 45 years ago are returning to the eastern part of Germany, claiming as their private property the productive

forces and soil, transforming workers into wage slaves, creating mass unemployment and poverty and dismantling all social gains.

It is the very same bourgeoisie which, in the first half of this century, committed the most barbaric crimes ever witnessed by humanity. Their return to the eastern territories, which they themselves considered as lost, is a blow not only against the German but also against the international working class.

Trusts like Krupp, Thyssen, Siemens, Bosch and banks like the Dresdner Bank and the Deutsche Bank transformed the whole of Germany into a huge war and murder machine, sent millions to their deaths or to be savagely mutilated on the battlefields of two world wars, tortured to death millions in the concentration camps of the Nazis as unpaid slaves and exterminated millions more in the gas chambers. In its murderous hunt for profits, the bourgeoisie did not hesitate to make lampshades out of the skin of their victims and soap out of their bones. Now the way has been paved for this same bourgeoisie, its leading families, banks and trusts, which still carry the same names, to take possession of the enterprises, the land and the estates from which they were driven after 1945.

The same state which was taken over unaltered from the Nazis with the help of the Allied powers after 1945 and provided temporarily with the “democratic” paper mask of the Grundgesetz (constitution), the same judiciary whose judges were never called to account nor brought to trial is reentering the territory of the hitherto existing GDR.

The social consequences of these developments for the working class are already apparent. In the autumn of last year, millions took to the streets and demanded an end to the arbitrary rule of the bureaucracy and the Stasi, for political freedom and the improvement of living conditions. Now they are confronted with unemployment and capitalism.

In order to create a favorable climate for capitalist exploitation, virtually all the social conquests have been abolished, in particular the right to a job, to an education, to medical care and to preschools. Three million unemployed and part-time workers in the East are added to 2 million unemployed and 4 million living on social welfare in the West. Additional millions have already been scheduled to be laid off through the planned destruction of the state-owned enterprises and agricultural coops in the former GDR.

At the same time, pensioners are being driven into impoverishment, and thousands of youth deprived of job training and higher education. Union wages are being kept at a level which is 40 or, at best, 50 percent of western wages—not, as has been claimed, in order to produce an economic boom in the East, but to be used as a crowbar to destroy wages and jobs in the West! A massive employment of contract workers from the East is already in place in the West, but their wages amount to but a fourth or a third of what West German workers receive. Numerous enterprises like Opel, Siemens, Daimler Benz Salamander, Krupp, etc. are already using plants in the East as sweatshops to reduce wage costs and eliminate jobs and plants in the West.

How was this possible? Why was the working class not in a position to organize stronger resistance to this development? Why are the same workers who took to the streets against the hated Stalinist dictatorship and drove out Honecker and Krenz now confronted with a new dictatorship, that of the Deutsche Bank and of German imperialism?

Without answering these questions, without an understanding of the social forces and political tendencies which are responsible for this defeat, the working class cannot make a single step forward. It cannot defend a single conquest and it is condemned to suffer even worse blows in the future.

The working class must above all understand the thoroughly counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism. In the GDR, it is not socialism which failed, but its worst enemy, Stalinism. The collapse of the GDR has pronounced a devastating historical judgment on Stalinism: for 40 years the SED enjoyed virtually unlimited power. It did not use that power to build socialism, but to defend its privileges, suppress the working class and keep it in tow. When it could not gag the resistance against its rule any longer, it handed over everything that two generations of workers had built at the price of innumerable sacrifices to the capitalist monopolies and banks. Meanwhile—as the PDS—it collaborates closely with the capitalist state.

In the whole of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, the Stalinist bureaucracy has taken the same road. Stalinism does not lead to socialism, but leads back to capitalism! It is not a mistaken attempt to build socialism, but its greatest obstacle.

Events in the GDR have shown that it is not enough to hate Stalinism. The collapse of Stalinism leads to the triumph of capitalism if the working class is not armed with an independent political program and if it does not seize the initiative itself. It must settle accounts politically, theoretically and programmatically with Stalinism and drive it out of the workers movement, together with its accomplices, and build a new international socialist party, the Fourth International.

The GDR was not an economic wreckage; its production plants were “not “scrap material,” as the bourgeoisie’s propaganda unceasingly claims. Based on state-owned property, the tenth strongest industry in the world was built on a small territory and with a population of 16 million, despite the crippling role of the ruling bureaucracy.

As part of their scorched earth strategy for the reintroduction of capitalism, the capitalists are now closing factories which were of decisive importance for the whole of Eastern Europe or, like the camera producer Praktika, held a respected position on the world market. Their justification that there is no market for these companies is a blatant lie. The real reason for the closures is that they fear competition with their own enterprises or are anxious that their American, Japanese or European rivals may buy them off and gain a foothold in the German or Eastern European market.

The GDR was economically and socially more developed than many areas of Western Europe, such as Spain and Portugal, or the impoverished areas in the south of Italy and the north of Britain. None of the capitalist countries was a match for its social welfare system, except perhaps the Scandinavian countries. It is only the reintroduction of capitalism in the former GDR that has led to mass poverty.

Its collapse and that of the other East European countries does not prove the superiority of the market economy over planned economy, but the impossibility of building a self-sufficient socialist economy within the boundaries of an isolated country.

Contrary to the claims by the SED bureaucracy, the GDR has never been a socialist country. The precondition for a socialist society is not just the abolition of private property and capitalist exploitation, but a higher lever of productivity than that achieved by capitalism. This requires access to the world market. The claim that it was possible to build a self-contained socialist economy within the narrow boundaries of the GDR,

completely independent of the laws of the world market, was a reactionary utopia, which served to dupe the working class and to lead it into a historical blind alley.

The theory of “building socialism in a single country” was first proclaimed by Stalin in 1924 in complete opposition to the perspective of the world socialist revolution for which Lenin, Trotsky and the Communist International which they founded fought. It expressed the interests of the rising bureaucracy and was used later by that same bureaucracy as a weapon in the persecution of its Marxist opponents. The SED regime and all the other regimes established by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe after World War II were established on the basis of that reactionary theory. The collapse of the GDR was its inevitable outcome.

The rapid economic progress achieved by the GDR, on the basis of the nationalized property relations and despite its isolation and the parasitism of the bureaucracy, of necessity increased its dependence on the world market. Simultaneously, it became harder and harder for it to sell its products on the world market and to compete with the capitalist monopolies which had access to the international money markets, organized their production on a world basis and exploited workers in East Asia and Latin America on the basis of slave wages.

Under the pressure of the capitalist world market, the GDR and all the other Stalinist-ruled countries slid into an economic crisis which intensified social tensions within the country—the conflict between the bureaucracy and the working class and various layers of the petty bourgeoisie—and led in 1989 to the breakdown of most of the Stalinist regimes. In the GDR this collapse occurred quickest because it was economically the most developed and the most dependent on the world economy. Behind the collapse of the GDR are the same laws which must also lead the capitalist countries to a sharper and sharper crisis: the incompatibility of modern world economy with the boundaries of the nation states.

There were, as has been stressed time and again by the International Committee, only two ways out of that crisis: access to the world market on a capitalist basis, i.e., the reintroduction of capitalism with all its consequences for the working class as can now be seen in the former GDR, Poland, Hungary, etc., or access to the world market on a socialist basis through the mobilization of the international working class for the overthrow of capitalism.

For the Stalinist bureaucracy, the second way was excluded from the start because it would have meant voluntarily renouncing its power and privileges. As Trotsky said of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR itself, no devil has ever voluntarily cut off its own claws.

Confronted by a mass movement of millions in November 1989 with the impossibility of defending its privileges on the old basis—as a parasite on the nationalized property—the SED bureaucracy sacrificed its most hated leaders and, along with the “bloc parties” threw itself into the arms of the capitalists.

SED factory directors and department heads turned in their party cards en masse and reemerged as newly born capitalist managers in order to sweat and drive their workers as in former times. Some of them stayed in the PDS, because, as its program states, the capitalist market economy “proved beyond any doubt to be superior, more effective, more flexible and beneficial to the creativity of mankind.” It is “a precondition to the free development of the individual, for the improvement of the quality of life and for the satisfaction of needs.”

Almost all the names of the members of the national committee of the FDJ (the young Stalinists) are now to be found in the Commerce register of Berlin. Its members immediately founded a large number of profitable “GmbH’s” (private limited liability companies), which are converting the

former luxury vacation resorts of these youthful bureaucrats into lucrative hotels that they now regard as their own private property.

The “recorders” which had played harmoniously for four decades in the Berlin orchestra and were nothing more than a special department of the Stalinist apparatus, went over as one man into the camp of the bourgeoisie in order to strike up anew melody in the Bonn orchestra. As happened once before in German history, in this amazing transformation, all the culprits have become “victims.”

If the bureaucracy had expended only a portion of the energy it utilized in safeguarding its party assets and attending to its new privileges to defend the social conquests of the workers, the latter would be in a considerably better position today. The key role in this unprecedented betrayal was played by the SED, now the PDS. The Modrow government took responsibility for imposing the restoration of capitalism in the GDR and in handing over state power to the German bourgeoisie. Its ministers, like the minister for economic affairs, Mrs. Luft, presented ready-to-use plans which had been worked out for years in the cozy rooms of the bureaucracy and its academic lackeys, in order to impose the “performance principle” i.e., capitalist exploitation and the “all-sided commodity-money-relationship,” i.e., the capitalist market economy.

The Stalinist bureaucrats, general directors and trade union functionaries began shamelessly to sell the factories and the landed property and cast all the social gains of the workers into the hungry maw of the capitalists. Modrow made sure that the repressive state apparatus was kept intact in order to be taken over by the capitalists and that the Stasi remained largely in place. At the same time, with his plan for a “contractual community” between the GDR and the FRG, he introduced the monetary union.

After a visit to Moscow, he returned with the slogan of the German nationalists, “Germany, One Fatherland,” in order to impose the unification of Germany on a capitalist basis with the full support of Gorbachev.

The delegates negotiating on behalf of the Modrow government made no attempt to defend any of the rights and social guarantees of the workers or even bring any of these into play as a negotiating issue. Although they still held state power, they surrendered everything. In this the Stalinists were supported by petty-bourgeois parties sitting at the “round table,” the Neues Forum (New Forum), Demokratie Jetzt (Democracy Now), the SPD, the Vereinigte Linke (United Left), etc., all of whom entered a government of “national responsibility.” To prevent the increasing wave of strikes and independent actions against the Stasi from sweeping away the Modrow regime, they threw into the bargain all the authority they had won as victims of the old regime. Three months later at the Volkskammerwahl (the elections to the East German parliament), they wondered what had become of that authority.

Despite their efforts, a growing wave of strikes in January shook the state apparatus and the government. Modrow himself stated later that he saw only one alternative in January, to surrender the GDR to the capitalists or to suppress the movement bloodily. He excluded from the start any response to the demands of the workers.

To prevent a collapse of the government before the handing over of power to the Bonn government, the elections to the Volkskammer were brought forward, so as to provide capitalist restoration with a legal cover. De Maiziere, a longstanding pillar of the Stalinist regime, became nothing but a puppet of the Kohl government. Relying on the old judiciary, police apparatus, the Stasi and the trade union bureaucrats, his job was to implement the orders coming from Bonn.

In these decisive months, the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter was the only political tendency warning not only of the consequences of capitalist restoration, but also the role that the Stalinists and petty-bourgeois democrats would play in its implementation.

We refused to sing in the chorus of those who hung onto the coattails of the SED/PDS under the slogan, “Defend the GDR.” The working class,

we stressed time and again, can only defend its conquests if it carries the political revolution to the end, overthrows the Stalinist bureaucracy and builds a real socialist society together with its international allies. On that basis, we welcomed the downfall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of Honecker and Krenz in the autumn of 1989. The going over of the entire Stalinist bureaucracy to the camp of capitalism has entirely confirmed the warnings and the standpoint of the BSA.

The betrayal of the Stalinist SED/PDS has not taken the BSA by surprise. The Trotskyist movement had already in 1933 drawn the conclusion that Stalinism had definitively transformed the Communist International and the parties affiliated to it into an agency of imperialism and that the fight for socialism required the smashing of Stalinism and the building of a new international, the Fourth International. The International Committee, to which the BSA is affiliated, was founded in 1953 in order to fight inside the Fourth International against the conception that Stalinism could be transformed into a socialist tendency under the pressure of the masses.

Stalinism arose in the 1920s in the Soviet Union. It does not embody the heritage of the October Revolution, but the reaction against it. It is the result of the revolution's isolation because of the devastating defeats of the international working class. The continuous pressure of imperialism and of the capitalist world economy upon the first workers state, an economically and technologically backward country at the end of World War I, created the conditions under which a privileged layer could rise within the state apparatus, and then the party apparatus, and put the working class under its political tutelage. This layer, the bureaucracy, found its political leader in Stalin.

Social democracy is mainly responsible for the continued isolation of the Soviet Union and finally for the rise of the Stalinism. It was the SPD which in 1918 under the guidance of Scheidemann and Noske bloodily smashed the November revolution, organized the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and helped the beaten and discredited bourgeoisie back to power. The working class paid the full price for that bloody betrayal 15 years later with the coming to power of Hitler. The growth of the Nazis resulted from the strangling of the proletarian revolution under conditions where there was no way for the bourgeoisie to extricate itself from the crisis of German capitalism other than fascist dictatorship and war.

In 1924, in the immediate aftermath of Lenin's death, Stalin broke from the perspective of the world socialist revolution and replaced it with the program of “socialism in a single country.” This nationalist program was to insure the power of the ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and led to devastating defeats for the international working class, as was the case in 1926 in Britain and 1927 in China. These defeats reinforced the isolation of the Soviet Union and thus strengthened the position of the bureaucracy against the working class.

In Germany in 1933, Stalin's policy led to a catastrophe of historical dimensions. Even though the German Communist Party had millions of workers supporting it, it proved absolutely unable to unite the working class against the danger of fascism. It categorically rejected a united front with the Social Democratic Party, as was demanded by the Trotskyist Left Opposition. It characterized the SPD as “social fascist” and equated it with the Nazis. This policy divided the working class, paralyzed it politically and delivered it without a fight to the Nazi dictatorship, paving the way to World War II. The German catastrophe and the Comintern leadership's refusal to draw any lessons from it marked the definitive going over of the Stalinist bureaucracy to the camp of counterrevolution.

In France and Spain, the Stalinists entered into popular front alliances with the bourgeoisie, leading to more catastrophic defeats as a consequence. This popular front policy was accompanied by the murder of all the Bolshevik leaders of the October Revolution, in particular, the

leaders of the Marxist Opposition around Leon Trotsky, and finally Trotsky himself. Units of the GPU secret police pursued Left Oppositionists who resisted Stalin's policy around the globe. In the Soviet Union, the members of the Left Opposition were liquidated by the tens of thousands. However, the popular front was not the lowest depth to which Stalin was to sink: in 1939 he made a pact with Hitler. In 1943 the Communist International, which had long before ceased to be a revolutionary organization, was formally dissolved.

The founding of the GDR in Soviet-occupied Germany did not signify Stalinism's turn away from its thoroughly counterrevolutionary role. It was a result of the agreements made by Stalin with Roosevelt and Churchill after the defeat of the Nazi regime, in order to forestall a revolutionary wave in war devastated Europe. The Kremlin bureaucracy guaranteed that the Stalinist parties in Western Europe, in particular, in Italy and France where they had a mass influence, would support the establishment of bourgeois regimes and the rebuilding of capitalism. In return, the bureaucracy would gain control over a number of "buffer states," which were supposed to protect it against renewed imperialist attacks.

Originally, the Stalinists did not even consider carrying out expropriations in these countries. Every independent move made by the working class was brutally suppressed, reaching its highest point in the suppression of the workers' uprisings in the GDR in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956. The first task of the Ulbricht group, which had been flown into Soviet-occupied Germany, was to squash every independent initiative taken by the working class, to dissolve all the independent socialist and antifascist committees, and to replace them with its own committees.

It was only under the pressure of the Cold War and the quick economic growth of capitalism in the West, that the Stalinist bureaucracy went over to expropriations in order to ensure its own rule. It did not do this through the method of proletarian revolution, but by bureaucratic decrees. The structure of the bourgeois state apparatus was meticulously preserved.

The policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe remained completely within the framework of the counterrevolutionary perspective of "socialism in a single country." Proletarian internationalism was for them a hollow phrase by which they designated not the fight for the socialist revolution, but the visits which these Stalinist parasites made to each other's dachas. In contrast to this, they isolated the working class by means of walls and barbed wire from the workers in the West. Their fear of the international solidarity of the working class was so great that they even forbid travelling to foreign "socialist" countries, and even inside the GDR itself, or allowed it only under continuous police surveillance. Foreign workers whom they "borrowed" from friendly regimes in Vietnam, Cuba and Mozambique were treated like slaves.

The role played by the Stalinists in the East was supplemented by that of social democracy in the West, which fully supported the reconstruction of imperialist Germany. The crimes committed by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the name of "socialism" against the working class constantly provided the anticommunism of social democracy with new material.

The partition of Germany, which was pushed ahead by Adenauer with the support of SPD leader Schumacher, occurred with the reciprocal agreement of the Stalinists and the imperialists. The German bourgeoisie never gave up their pretensions to the East; but for the time being, they felt more secure with the working class divided. As in 1953 when the workers dared an uprising against Ulbricht, it was Willy Brandt, then mayor of West Berlin, who prevented them from solidarizing with workers in the West.

In its 40-year existence, it was not the working class who ruled the GDR, but a bureaucracy which had been imposed by Stalin and maintained in power by his successors. In the final analysis, the bureaucracy ruled as a counterrevolutionary regent for imperialism. With

the handing over of power to the imperialists, it has carried its policy to the final conclusion.

As in all its previous actions, the SED modeled itself after its prototype in Moscow, without whose explicit agreement and active help capitalist restoration at such speed would not have been possible. In view of the ruins of its policy, the Kremlin bureaucracy under Gorbachev has itself taken the road of capitalist restoration and is trying to preserve its privileges by preparing to become a new capitalist class.

Gorbachev's complete support for the reunification of Germany on a capitalist basis has its source in the domestic political needs of the bureaucracy. It requires the economic, political and military support of imperialism in order to settle scores with its own working class and has thrown overboard every semblance of opposition to imperialism. Today, it supports membership of a unified Germany within NATO and the war drive of the imperialists against Iraq; tomorrow, it will demand that UN troops intervene against the Soviet working class and oppressed minorities like the Armenians.

The Stalinist bureaucracy could not have pushed its betrayal so far and carried it out so easily without the support of Pabloism, a revisionist tendency which developed in the early 1950s inside the Fourth International and destroyed many of its sections. The most important of the Pabloite groups, the United Secretariat, is led today by Professor Ernest Mandel.

Pabloism is directly responsible for the working class being without a revolutionary leadership when the SED regime broke down, and the initiative therefore reverting to the capitalists and the Stalinists. Mandel, who still calls himself a Trotskyism has in the meantime openly placed himself on the side of the Stalinist bureaucracy. He supports the PDS and appears on joint platforms with PDS leader Gysi.

The end of the GDR not only signifies a devastating historical verdict on Stalinism, but also on Pabloism, which attributes a progressive role and a historical mission to the Stalinist bureaucracy. The fight led by the International Committee of the Fourth International against Pabloism since its foundation in 1953 therefore acquires an enormous practical significance for the working class. (A comprehensive exposition of the fight against Pabloism is contained in David North's book, *The Heritage We Defend*.)

Based on their impressions of the nationalizations carried out by the Stalinists in Eastern Europe, the Pabloites in the early 1950s rejected Trotsky's analysis of the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism. Pablo, at that time the secretary of the Fourth International, defended, with Mandel's support, the conception that the Stalinist bureaucracy would move to the left under the pressure of the masses and would open up a path to socialism, however protracted. The Pabloites attributed a progressive character to the states which came into being in Eastern Europe. Pablo even declared that the development of socialism would for centuries take the form of such deformed workers states.

Against this, the ICFI defended the conception that the East European states, notwithstanding all measures of reform, such as the introduction of nationalized property relations and planning of industry and agriculture, were not historically viable because their origin was not in a proletarian revolution, but in the counterrevolutionary maneuvers of the bureaucracy.

The ICFI characterized these states as deformed workers states. It advocated the defense of the nationalized property relations and of the principle of the planned economy. It simultaneously stressed, by means of the term "deformed," that the fate of these states—whether they led back to capitalism or developed towards socialism—depended completely on whether the working class succeeded in violently overthrowing the bureaucracy and taking power into its own hands.

The actual development fully confirmed the position of the ICFI: the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe lasted not centuries, but no

more than 40 years. Moreover, under conditions where the working class was not armed politically against Stalinism, they led back to capitalism.

In practice, Pabloism liquidated a large part of the Trotskyist movement. If Stalinism could be pushed towards socialism under the pressure of the masses, then there was no longer any necessity for the building of independent sections of the Fourth International.

The German section, which still had, in Berlin alone, over 50 members in spite of its double persecution by the Nazis and the Stalinists, was liquidated into social democracy and completely destroyed. Oskar Hippe, a leading cadre of the German section, remained faithful to the perspective of the Fourth International and, as a result, was arrested by the Soviet secret police and incarcerated for eight years by the Ulbricht regime. He received no support from the Pabloites, who did absolutely nothing to mobilize the international workers movement for his release.

For decades the Pabloites supported and glorified everything which appeared suitable to them as a substitute for the fight to build the Fourth International. In Eastern Europe, they praised intellectuals like Jacek Kuron in Poland or Robert Havemann, Walter Janka and Rudolf Bahro in the GDR as a “Marxist opposition” and even as a “Trotskyist tendency.” They did not attack Stalinism from the left, in the interest of the proletariat, but from the right, from the standpoint of bourgeois democracy and of nationalism.

In 1956 they supported Gomulka in Poland, as a “centrist wing of the bureaucracy linked with revolutionary tendencies”—Gomulka who, in 1970, had hundreds of striking workers shot in Gdansk. They pointed to his policies, as well as those of Dubcek in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, as proof that Stalinism was able to reform itself. In the West, they were not much choosier. There they glorified petty-bourgeois nationalists like Fidel Castro in Cuba, Ben Bella in Algeria or the Sandinistas in Nicaragua as “revolutionary leaders of the proletariat” and as substitutes for the building of a Marxist leadership of the working class.

The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe has definitively unmasked the Pabloites as agents of Stalinism. The wall had hardly fallen when Professor Mandel hurried to East Berlin in order to advise the Stalinists on how to carry out capitalist restoration and to defend them publicly against the BSA. Our party had called for the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy in an appeal which had been smuggled over the border in large numbers. Mandel's supporters in the GDR participated as part of the United Left in the round table. Today they play a leading role for the PDS in their election campaign in the West and East.

Another Pabloite tendency which rushed to the aid of the collapsing Stalinist regime in the GDR is the Spartacist tendency of the American petty-bourgeois radical James Robertson, which is active in the GDR under the label Spartakist Arbeiterpartei. This tendency, which supported the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, defended the SED bureaucracy and its state apparatus in such a hysterical way that it soon earned the appellation “Stasi Party.”

The collapse of the Eastern European Stalinist regimes has shown that the real Trotskyists are those who fought against Pabloism—the International Committee of the Fourth International and its German section, the BSA.

The betrayal of the Stalinist SED/PDS is supplemented by the further right-wing development of the Social Democratic Party (SPD). If the SPD in earlier days justified its support for capitalism with the argument that capitalism could be reformed in the interests of the working class, today they claim that it is necessary to renounce all reforms in order to keep capitalism alive.

In eastern Germany the SPD and DGB (the social democratic trade union) bureaucracies openly support the attacks by the capitalists against the working class. They now try to persuade workers in the East to give up their jobs and join the ranks of the unemployed, using the same cynical

maneuvers, such as retraining and the short workweek, which they employed to impose the closures and mass layoffs in the steel and the coal industries over the last 15 years against the workers' resistance. In this they collaborate closely with the old Stalinist functionaries, who, almost without exception, occupy posts in the management of enterprises, the city councils, the state institutions and the trade union apparatuses.

In the West they impose an enormous intensification of exploitation in the factories through regular weekend work, continuous night shifts, group piece work, wage cuts and the destruction of jobs. The slightest opposition—such as the union oppositionists, Metaller bei Opel in Bochum—is answered with mass expulsions. At the bidding of the bureaucracy, the trade union not only provides the trainers and slave drivers for group work, but functions as the factory police force. The trade union and SPD leaders collaborate with the Kohl government to cut pensions, slash spending in the health service and in education and destroy jobs in the public service. In this way the capitalists have been able to develop their exports on the world market and create within the country a reservoir of cheap labor from the 2 million who are unemployed and the 4 million who depend on social welfare.

Above all, the social democratic trade union bureaucracy blocks any solidarity between workers in the West and workers affected by mass layoffs in the East. Since the removal of the wall and the barbed wire, the bureaucracy has split the working class through the imposition of different wage scales, and in this way created the possibility for the capitalists to use mass unemployment and cheap labor in the East as a weapon against the gains of the trade unions in the West.

In the parliamentary elections, the SPD is mounting a campaign under its leader Lafontaine which rejects any social reforms. Instead, in the form of an ecological tax on gasoline, fuel and other energy sources, they announced an out-and-out raid on the purses of workers, families and pensioners. Lafontaine bluntly defends the extension of night work, weekend work and cheap labor “in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the industrial base of the Federal Republic.” SPD leaders Brandt and Vogel have repeatedly demanded a close collaboration between the right-wing CDU and the SPD in the period following the parliamentary elections. The working class is directly confronted with the danger of an open dictatorship, taking the form of a grand coalition or emergency government.

The rightward turn of social democracy has the same cause as the open renegacy of all the Stalinists to the camp of capitalism: their nationalist program. The globalization of production and the bitter fight for control of the world market which characterize imperialism today have led to the bankruptcy of all nationalist programs. Against a bourgeoisie which operates on an international scale and which is in a position to transfer its capital and its production from one country to another at will, the working class cannot fight on the basis of a national program.

According to the logic of the nationalist program of social democracy, workers can only be well off if “their” capitalists, i.e., the German capitalists, are well off. If the world crisis of capitalism and the conflicts on the world market intensify, the working class is obligated to support “its” bourgeoisie in the trade war against its rivals. It must maintain the “competitiveness of the industrial base of the Federal Republic of Germany” by accepting layoffs, wage cuts and rationalizations, and must not endanger business with strikes.

On the basis of this program, trade unions must be transformed from a fighting instrument of the workers into an instrument to discipline the workers, and the trade union bureaucracy must become a direct organ of corporate management and the capitalist state. This is an international phenomena. In every capitalist country, the trade unions and the Stalinist and social democratic parties have made decisive steps in this direction, which Trotsky termed “corporatism,” the complete integration of the trade unions into the capitalist state.

The policy of the social democrats and the Stalinists is covered up by numerous organizations of the radical petty bourgeoisie. The PDS itself, having lost state power, turns increasingly towards this milieu. In preparation for the parliamentary elections, the Stalinists made great efforts to unite into a single “Left Slate” as many of these organizations as possible, such as the Maoists of the MLPD and KBW, the VSP, the Unified Left, etc., and to tie them to the PDS. Meanwhile, the Stalinists have offered the representatives of these organizations a place on their own ticket.

They have thoroughly adapted their program to the program of these organizations, which came mainly out of the student protest movement of 1968. Under the slogan “For a Third Way,” the PDS is trying to revive ancient reformist illusions which failed a long time ago, such as “economic democracy,” “codetermination” and “social orientation of the market economy”—illusions with which social democracy has embellished its pro-capitalist program for 70 years.

The program of the PDS distinguishes itself from others by giving up any even formal reference to the working class, which the old SED bureaucrats had upheld in order to justify their regime. Petty-bourgeois nobodies like Helga Adler or Andre Brie and verbose cynics like Gregor Gysi have taken over the leadership of the PDS in order to incite against the working class jittery middle class layers which were well provided with privileges under the SED.

The program of the PDS and the Left Slate differentiates itself only slightly from that of the Greens, who have in the meantime united in the GDR (East Germany) with petty-bourgeois opposition parties like Neues Forum, Bündnis 90 (Alliance 90), Initiative Menschenrechte (Human Rights Initiative), etc. They do not represent the interests of the working class, but those of petty-bourgeois layers. They attack Stalinism from the right. They do not attack it from the left, from the standpoint of proletarian democracy.

Their aim is not the abolition of all forms of oppression and exploitation, but merely the amelioration of their own position and a greater say in the affairs of the state. They were all for the introduction of the market economy, supported the introduction of capitalism, and subsequently limited their action to pitiful whining at the “unexpectedly” harsh social consequences. If they turn to the working class, it is only to use it as a means of pressure for carrying out their own interests. If the Stalinist and social democratic bureaucracies are no longer in a position to impose their right-wing program on the working class, the petty-bourgeois “democrats” very obligingly jump into the breach, to provide an SPD-led government, as in Berlin or Hesse, with a parliamentary majority for budget cuts, or to provide support for attacks on trade union rights, as in the day nursery strike in Berlin.

The war preparations in the Middle East have completely unmasked the pro-imperialist character of these tendencies. At the start of the 1980s they protested against NATO and hypocritically called for international solidarity; now they support UN sanctions and the military drive against Iraq.

The decades-long domination of the working class by social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies has driven the workers movement into a deep crisis. Millions of workers have been laid off in a matter of weeks and thrown onto the streets, without the trade union leaders uttering one word of protest. In the Middle East, the imperialists are preparing a bloodbath which is going to surpass everything that has happened since World War II, and again, not a word of protest. The lack of any organized opposition from the working class has given the bourgeoisie an almost free hand to implement the most reactionary policy.

This crisis is comparable only to the crisis of 1914, when at the outbreak of the war, the organized workers movement virtually collapsed and only

a handful of Marxists in the whole world—Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht—defended a socialist perspective. As in 1914, this crisis is the outcome of a profound historical upheaval. The thunder of the cannons of the First World War announced that all the historical contradictions which had been building up over a period of 40 years under the surface of capitalist society had reached the point of explosion.

The epoch of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, had begun. The social democratic mass parties which had been growing continuously over decades without a single opportunity to conquer state power had adapted themselves to the framework of the capitalist state, and were not up to the new task. They gave up the internationalist phrases which they had advocated up to that point. They professed the “defense of the fatherland” and supported the imperialist slaughter.

A 30-year-long period ensued, only interrupted by short breaks where one revolutionary upheaval followed the other, and the Second World War came out of the First. Today the collapse of the GDR and of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe signals the end of the postwar order which imperialism established after 1945 in close collaboration with the Kremlin bureaucracy, allowing it to stabilize world economy and avoid a revolutionary confrontation with the working class. This order has been shattered. With the explosion in Eastern Europe, the chain of imperialism has broken at its weakest link.

Contrary to all the propaganda of the bourgeoisie, the collapse of the Stalinist regimes has not opened up a new era of peace and capitalist development. A new prewar period of gigantic political upheavals, wars and social revolutions on the whole planet has begun. For the working class, the fight for socialism is an absolute necessity if it is not to perish under imperialism in poverty, barbarism, world wars and atomic destruction.

Indeed, the collapse of the nation states in Eastern Europe is only the initial result of a deep, worldwide crisis of imperialism. Shattered is the international equilibrium within which the imperialists organized their rule and defended their global interests with the help of the Stalinist bureaucracies. The old conflicts between the imperialist powers, which in this century have plunged humanity into the carnage of two world wars, have flared up again over a new division of the world.

Whether in Eastern Europe or in the Balkans, whether between Germany and Poland, Japan and the Soviet Union, on the Indian subcontinent or in the Middle East, everywhere the national boundaries drawn up by the imperialists after the First or Second World War are again placed in question, and old nation-states are breaking down. Open world trade is being replaced by trade blocs. The war deployment against Iraq shows that the imperialist powers are waging a struggle for cheap raw materials, markets and spheres of influence once again, employing military means without being deterred by the prospect of the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants.

This development is being driven forward by the unprecedented intensification of the world economic crisis of the capitalist system. The big banks of Japan and the United States are on the verge of insolvency, following the nonpayment of interest owed by the debtor countries in Latin America. The real estate market is collapsing at home, and the financing of the huge US balance of payment deficit seems impossible. In the postwar period, the USA formed the backbone of a relatively stable monetary system under the leadership of the dollar. Its economic might made possible an expansion of world trade. In the interval, Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany rose as its most serious rivals on the world market. But neither Japan nor Germany is even remotely in the position to replace the US as the mainstay for the world economy.

In Japan, banks and finance companies have lost a sum amounting to half the gross domestic product realized in the course of a year, through the continuous fall of shares on the stock exchange. To keep their heads

above water, they are now forced to withdraw their money from the USA and Europe. A bank crash, far overshadowing the crisis of the 1930s, is threatening to hurl the economy of all continents into the abyss.

Inflation rates are already rising all over the world, while economic growth is decreasing even in the industrialized countries, threatening the development this year of a real recession. The rise of oil prices on the world market to over \$40 a barrel—the World Bank expects a further rise to over \$60 a barrel!—will accelerate this recession.

In the 24 so-called wealthy industrialized countries of the OECD, there are at present already 20 million registered unemployed. In the countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa, impoverishment assumes incredible dimensions. But in the imperialist industrialized countries as well, the living standards of the working class have been systematically reduced in the last 10 years and the rights and social gains won in the past have been undermined or taken away.

In Germany, the great demand for credit for the reunification has pushed interest rates to record heights and created the basis for high state indebtedness, as in the United States. The federal government and the Bundesbank had to give up the policy of stability which they had been following. The rise in oil prices and the plunge of the stock markets over the last weeks have clearly shown that German imperialism has not surmounted its historical weakness: not only the highly developed technology and industrial production, but also the stock exchange and the banks are dependent on the world market and the international capital market. The withdrawal of foreign money, especially Japanese, has led to a fall in prices of over 30 percent at the Frankfurt and Dusseldorf stock exchanges since the end of July. A worldwide recession threatens West German industry with an export decline similar to that of the 1930s, while the East German economy has to a considerable extent already lost its markets in Eastern Europe as a consequence of the monetary union and the economic collapse of Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, etc.

This insoluble crisis of imperialism will inevitably lead to the outbreak of revolutionary struggles by the proletariat in Eastern and Western Europe in the coming period.

The fate of the working class and of humanity in general, the question of whether the collapse of the postwar order will lead to new period of wars and barbarism or to the victory of the world socialist revolution, depends on the resolution of the crisis of working class leadership. The Fourth International, which today is led by the International Committee of the Fourth International, is the only political tendency in the world which possesses a spotless banner. It can look back at a history of almost 70 years in which it fought tirelessly against the betrayals of Stalinism and drew the lessons of the defeats for which Stalinism was responsible. It has defended and developed the program and the perspectives of Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Lenin and Trotsky against Stalinism and every form of opportunism.

Paramount in the BSA's program is the fight for the international unity of the working class!

The working class has no fatherland. It is an international class which has nothing in common with the national interests of the bourgeoisie. It cannot support the bourgeoisie's trade wars and colonial wars and must defeat any attempt to divide its ranks, whether between East and West Germans or between German and foreign workers!

The second central point in this program is the fight for socialist policies!

Capitalism is a completely bankrupt social system which has only survived through the betrayal of Stalinism and social democracy. Socialism is the only way forward for the working class, if it does not want to perish with capitalism. It must conquer power, expropriate the factories without compensation to the capitalists, organize and plan production under its own control on a world basis.

The third crucial point in the program of the BSA is the perspective of

the United Socialist States of Europe as part of a world socialist republic.

This is the only conceivable form of rule of the working class in a Europe which is economically and politically interconnected. The European revolution is a combination of the political revolution—the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracies in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe by the proletariat and the establishment of genuine workers states—and of the socialist revolution—the overthrow of capitalism in the West.

The Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter is taking part in the parliamentary election December 2 in order to mobilize the working class on this program and conduct the most comprehensive discussion in the workers movement on the lessons of the historical betrayals of the Stalinist and social democratic bureaucracies. The building of a new revolutionary leadership in the working class is the central orientation of the BSA in this election campaign.

The parliamentary election itself does not offer any solution to the problems confronting the working class. On the contrary, just as the Volkskammer election was a fraud to conceal the program of capitalist restoration in the GDR with a democratic cover, the Bundestag election is a fraud to provide a democratic fig leaf for a future grand coalition or emergency government's brutal attacks on the working class. The West German parliament is like all the other organs of the bourgeois state—an instrument for the oppression of the working class!

We call upon the working class:

Stop the capitalists from demolishing the state-owned factories in the former GDR and transforming the working class in the East and West into a mass of cheap wage slaves! Defend every single job, every past conquest and every right! Occupy factories threatened with closure and organize strikes!

Build workers councils as independent organs of the working class in the industrial areas and the neighborhoods to organize this struggle and lay the basis for genuine workers power!

Fight for the expropriation under workers control and without compensation of all monopolies, banks and financial companies.

The correctness of our Marxist prognosis, the correctness of our warnings and predictions and our tireless struggle for a proletarian program: these are the most important assets in the balance sheet of the International Committee of the Fourth International and the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter for the last 12 months. We appeal on this basis for all workers and youth to make the decision:

Support with all your energy the BSA election campaign, practically, financially and politically!

Participate in the teams to help circulate our program and the *Neue Arbeiterpresse*.

Because of the bourgeoisie's reactionary election laws which are intended to prevent representation of a proletarian opposition, the BSA is only in a position to present a slate of candidates for the states of Berlin and Saxony. In the industrial centers of Saxony, Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz) and in the West German steel town of Duisburg, we have put up constituency candidates in order to fight for the unity of the working class in Germany and internationally. We appeal for all workers in these constituencies to vote for the BSA and its program.

In all the other electoral districts, where the workers are deprived of the possibility of voting for this revolutionary program, we call for a vote for the SPD. This does not imply any political support for the SPD. We warn the working class explicitly against the illusion that an SPD-led government would be a lesser evil or would be friendlier towards the working class than a CDU-led (Christian Democratic Union) government. We call for a vote for the SPD in those districts where the BSA is not running only to differentiate between the open parties of the bourgeoisie, such as the CDU, CSU and the FDP, and the party which historically came out of the workers movement, a party with which, as a result of the

betrayals of Stalinism, important sections of the working class still identify. In this way we direct the attention of the working class to the treacherous role of the SPD in order to expose it.

The fact that in these parliamentary elections, in most of the constituencies, there is no alternative for class-conscious workers who do not want to give their votes to the CDU or to the Greens but to vote for the SPD, only underscores the urgency of the main task confronting the working class—the building of a new revolutionary leadership.

We call on all workers, trade unionists, housewives and youth who agree with our program and perspectives to become members today of the BSA, and thereby join the International Committee of the Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)