

Resolution of the National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (Germany)

In Defence of Leon Trotsky

17 August 2012

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party of Germany—PSG) held its National Congress in Berlin on June 22-24, 2012. In addition to delegates from Germany, representatives and co-thinkers of the International Committee of the Fourth International from other European countries, the United States, Australia and Sri Lanka attended the congress. The discussion focused on the crisis of the European Union and the political tasks arising from it. This was the subject of the main resolution, adopted unanimously by the congress, which the WSWs posted on August 14. The second resolution was posted on August 15 and the third on August 16. Today, we are posting the fourth resolution.

1. The 2012 Congress of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) welcomes and supports the struggle of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in defence of Leon Trotsky and his political heritage against historical falsification. The PSG regards the development of this campaign as a central component of its work of winning new generations of young people and workers to a revolutionary perspective and educating them in Marxism.

2. The representatives of the post-Soviet School of Historical Falsification—from the Stalinist military historian Dmitry Volkogonov to the British historians Ian Thatcher, Geoffrey Swain and Robert Service—fulfil a crucial need of ruling classes throughout the world. Faced with the imminent outbreak of major class conflicts, they seek to deny the younger generation access to the views, analyses and perspectives of Leon Trotsky.

3. They smear Trotsky's personal life and use the method of character assassination to disparage his personality, while twisting, distorting or totally ignoring his political writings. Their biographies of Trotsky are full of factual errors and misrepresentations that largely originate from the Stalinist School of Falsification. In this

way they attempt to stifle at the outset any serious interest in Trotsky's life and work.

4. The distortion of Trotsky's life and work is aimed at thwarting an understanding of the historical lessons of the twentieth century—an understanding that is imperative for the development of the revolutionary perspective required for the class confrontations of the twenty-first century. No such understanding can be achieved without studying the heritage of Leon Trotsky. He theoretically paved the way for the first victorious proletarian revolution and was, after Lenin, its most important leader as well as the most consistent opponent of its Stalinist degeneration. His analyses of Stalinism and Nazism are unsurpassed to this day. He is the most outstanding Marxist in the epoch of world capitalism and the founder of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.

5. The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has struggled against the post-Soviet School of Historical Falsification since it first began to emerge. In the 1990s, the IC worked closely with the Russian historian Vadim Rogovin, whose seven-volume work *Was There an Alternative?* substantiated the enormous importance of the Trotskyist Left Opposition in the Soviet Union.

6. More recently, David North's detailed refutation of the falsifications and distortions in the Trotsky biographies of Ian Thatcher, Geoffrey Swain and especially Robert Service, presented in the book *In Defence of Leon Trotsky*, has met with growing international interest and support, including the accreditation of expert historians.

7. Writing in the *American Historical Review*, US historian Bertrand Patenaude fully endorsed North's book and its criticism of Robert Service. The PSG welcomes this as well as the initiative of 14 scholars from Germany, Austria and Switzerland who addressed a letter to the Suhrkamp publishing house to protest against the German-

language publication of Robert Service's Trotsky biography. The 14 academics stood up for the defence of historical truth, methodological standards and publisher's integrity. We regard this support as an indication of significant changes now underway in the fields of science and culture.

8. The post-Soviet School of Historical Falsification is closely associated with the penetration of reactionary ideologies into the universities and the cultural branches of the media. Since the catastrophe of the Second World War, and particularly the collapse of the Soviet Union, schools of social and historical theory challenging Marxism and, more generally, science and the Enlightenment—such as the Frankfurt School, post-modernism and post-structuralism—have blossomed. These schools, whose roots go back to the nineteenth century philosophies of subjectivism (Fichte, Stirner, Nietzsche) dominate the universities and obstruct an open debate on the past and the pursuit of historical truth.

9. They attribute the causes of the catastrophes of the twentieth century to the eighteenth century Enlightenment, the pursuit of a scientific understanding of nature and society, and the utilisation of scientific discoveries and revolutionary technological advances in industry and society—and not to the defeats of the working class resulting from the betrayals of the social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies. They regard the scientific goal of seeking to understand objective truth as “presumptuous”. They claim that “the excessive development and application of modern science and technology” for the sake of overcoming poverty, disease, ignorance and social inequality constitutes a “threat to society” and “precondition for totalitarian dictatorships”.

10. Under conditions of the mounting crisis of capitalism, the ICFI's vigorous offensive on behalf of historical truth has met with success, putting representatives of the post-Soviet School of Historical Falsification on the defensive. This is evidenced by the response to the book *In Defence of Leon Trotsky*, the success of meetings on this issue in Leipzig and New York, and the letter from the 14 European academics.

11. Five years before the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, the most momentous event of the twentieth century, interest in the Russian Revolution is growing not only among historians, but also among artists. This year began with a retrospective at the Berlin Film Festival devoted to Soviet film. Major art exhibitions centred on Soviet art and architecture are currently taking place in Berlin and Basel in cooperation

with Mehring Publishers and the *World Socialist Web Site*. The PSG will intensify its collaboration with serious and thoughtful artists and strive to win them to the perspective of Marxism and socialism.

12. An important part of this campaign is the building of the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE), the student organisation of the ICFI and the PSG. The energy and enthusiasm of younger generations must be fused with an historically and scientifically grounded confidence in the progressive role of science and technology and the revolutionary role of the working class. The ISSE therefore strives to educate students in an irreconcilable struggle against subjectivist theories of history and philosophy, and on this basis to win their support for the building of a revolutionary party in the working class.

13. The PSG is on the side of all those scientists and writers who oppose post-modernism, post-structuralism and similar anti-scientific tendencies and defend the principles of the Enlightenment and scientific inquiry into nature and history. It seeks dialogue and cooperation with them and supports all initiatives promoting scientific research, including scientific analysis of the history of the revolutionary movement in the twentieth century, particularly concerning the role and politics of Leon Trotsky and the Trotskyist movement.

14. The elaboration and defence of historical truth is of major strategic importance for the PSG. Revolutionary perspectives aimed at transforming the entire contemporary social system and building a new socialist society must be based on a comprehensive and profound understanding of history, the key to grasping the complex contradictions, conflicts and unresolved problems of society.



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