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History Of The Federal Republic of Germany And The Old Left: Fragment From An Intervention In The Stammheim Trial¹

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In the course of the evolution of the world imperialist system under the hegemony of US capital and its political and military expression, US foreign policy, and its principle instrument, the US Army, the USA created, after 1945, three States outside of the USA to serve as operational bases for their external policy: the Federal Republic of Germany, South Korea, and South Vietnam. From the beginning these States had two functions for US imperialism: on the one hand, they served as operational bases for the US army in the strategy for the encirclement and final rollback of the Soviet Union or, more to the point, the Red Army; and, on the other hand, they served as operational bases for US capital to subject East and South-East Asia there and West Europe here to the interests of US capital.

The history of the FRG interests us for two reasons. What interests us is obviously the history of the old left, which is the old opposition, which, in 1966, with the entry of Social Democracy into the broad government coalition, was integrated and, as such, neutralized as an opposition. That which also naturally interests us, we who determine the revolutionary politic inside imperialism via proletarian internationalism, is the role of the FRG in the world system of American capital, which from Adenauer² to Schmidt³ follows the same line: anti-communism and political, economic and military subordination of West Europe to US foreign policy. In other words, the line from Adenauer to Schmidt in West German government policy is a function of the international policy of the USA, which is to say, a function of the role the USA has played since 1945 as the world's police force.

To say that the internal and foreign policies of South Korea and South Vietnam have been the policy of the CIA is a truism explained by the economic weakness of the comprador bourgeoisie in the neo-colonialist States. That a State with the economic potential of the FRG does not yet, after more than thirty years, have the power to determine its own policy is one of the reasons why a radical political orientation is

¹ The trial of Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Andreas Baader. The first major RAF trial.

² Konrad Adenauer - Founded CDU (Christian Democratic Party) after World War II.

³ Helmut Schmidt - SPD (Social Democratic Party) Chancellor at the time this was written.

particularly difficult to develop *within* this State and, as we have learned, cannot be developed except by armed struggle against imperialism.

And, it must be said, we know of no other country where the left so stubbornly refuses to become aware of its own history, which is, without doubt, the history of its defeats. That does not mean, however, that the battles that it has carried out didn't have a serious character or that they do not merit study. As we have made clear, the most pertinent analyses of social democratic policy, of its function *in favour* of capital, comes from the Italians. And the really valuable politico-economic analyses of the Third Reich and German fascism as State policy of German monopoly capitalism come from France. As for the large mobilization in the metropolises in 1966-1967 against the American war in Vietnam, it is absolutely undeniable that the legal left has turned it into a commodity, a product for consumption, has made its memory into a source of euphoria, but has never made the effort to understand what really happened, to understand where the student movement got its explosive power, its political relevance, etc.

But it is, in any event, normal that it was so, and it seems, in any case, that the experiences of the revolutionary anti-colonialists, for example those of the Algerian people, as Fanon⁴ has made known to the revolutionary left in the international debate, can be applied to the FRG as a result of its specific colonial status in the system of American domination. It seems equally true that, in the context of the international proletariat, the history of a people like that of the German people, and as such our history, ceases to be a history requiring shame, the natural reaction of all communists faced with German history, in any event since 1933. Because the whole history of Germany, of German Social Democracy, of the unions, was unable to prevent two imperialist world wars and twelve years of fascism; indeed it did not even really struggle against this in any appreciable way. This is quite simply a fact that we can't avoid while attempting to build the guerrilla here around an historical identity.

The history of the old left in the FRG is one of the Communist Party's decreasing militancy as it became a tool of the GDR⁵, and the corrupting influence of Social Democracy, via its symbolic figures, or more accurately, its masks, Heinmann⁶ and Brandt⁷.

The traditional left finally understood who Brandt was in 1958, in his role as a CIA puppet when, as is the case with all mayors of Berlin, he shifted from one project to the next in West Berlin, and, to carry out a virulent anti-communist campaign, placed himself at the head of the lobbying movements trying to prevent Bonn's projects to equip the German army with atomic weapons, so as to recuperate them and to drive them into anti-communism.

⁴ Frantz Fanon - psychiatrist. Supporter of FLN (National Liberation Front in Algeria) and theoretician of national liberation philosophy. Author of the influential books *Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Faces, White Masks*.

⁵ GDR - German Democratic Republic, East Germany.

⁶ Gustav Heinemann.- First Interior Minister under Adenauer in 1949-1950. In 1952 he left CDU to form German All People's Party. Later joined SPD. Federal Justice Minister in the '60s. President 1969-1972.

⁷ Willy Brandt – president of the Social Democratic Party and a leading figure in the Second International.

The political *project* which the USA pursues as a hegemonic power via the occupation of West Germany, which offers a global reactive and defensive role in the three western zones⁸ globally and a *potential* offensive role regionally, was always an illegitimate project. One of restoring monopoly capital, of restoring the former dominant elite in the economy and in the government so as to perpetuate the bourgeois dictatorship by maintaining it under the control of US capital, of rearming and integrating the three western zones into the economic and military system of US imperialism as the price of their national unity and of maintaining anti-communism as the dominant ideology. National unity is nothing more than an opportunist calculation (the elimination of the proletariat from politics).

This policy was never even open to debate. No election ever decided upon it; the decision was made in Washington. When in 1949, after the foundation of the Federal Republic, elections could finally be held, the currency of the FRG was already integrated into the system established at Bretton Woods⁹ and the Parliamentary Council had already issued a constitution for this State, one imposed by the Allies, which is to say the USA, within which the guiding political lines would be determined by *a single* person, the Chancellor. It was a constitution for a puppet regime, as can be seen if we take a serious look at the legacy of the Adenauer regime, rather than excuses about constitutional law meant to show that the lessons of the Weimar Republic¹⁰ have been learnt.

Within Social Democracy itself, the power struggles ended well for Schumacher's¹¹ anti-communist line. It was the SPD¹² who again took up its old role from 1918, that of being the bulwark against Communist influence and against any autonomous working class activity, the only difference being that it was now financed by US capital. All key positions in the union leadership at the federal level and in the DGB¹³ were occupied by old bureaucrats who, during the Weimar Republic, had supported capital and had proven their capacity to integrate the class struggle. All attempts, and naturally there were some, at reconstructing the organization of the proletariat based on the illegal groups which conducted the resistance during fascism and were smashed¹⁴.

The particular role of the FRG in the United States' system of domination, and, as such, its special place in the strategy of American capital, is the result of its history as a counter-revolutionary State set up by the USA in the context of the East-West conflict.

⁸ After WWII, Germany was divided into four zones, three controlled by western powers, the US, Britain and France. The fourth zone was the Soviet-controlled East Germany or GDR.

⁹ Bretton Woods - New Hampshire, USA, site of a 1944 international conference of 44 States, where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was founded.

¹⁰ Weimar Republic - Autocratic Republic that preceded Third Reich.

¹¹ Kurt Schumacher - President of SPD from 1946-1952.

¹² SPD - Social Democratic Party (Second International).

¹³ DGB - German Federation of Unions.

¹⁴ In the closing months of World War II some anti-fascist groups had emerged, carrying out armed attacks on the Nazi State. Politically outside of the control of the Allies, these groups would be suppressed and forcibly disbanded after the war - all the while many former Nazis would be shielded from prosecution and even eventually returned to their positions of power.

Which also explains the particular role played by German Social Democracy in the American strategy after Vietnam.

Among the historical reasons for the role of the FRG - the most powerful member of NATO after the USA and the State which has the most extensive conception of imperialist politics after the USA - is its continuity with the Third Reich and the fact that German monopoly capital has always been obliged to be extremely aggressive as a result of its structure, which makes it extremely dependent on the world market, on export.

The internal condition which permits the transformation of the FRG, as a State, into a profitable instrument for American foreign policy is that the proletarian organizations in the three post-war western zones came to be directly controlled by American capital thanks to Social Democracy, which had been bought by US capital, and thanks to unions controlled and financed by the CIA. This was always with the goal of depoliticizing the class struggle in the FRG, making anti-communism a basic element of all legally organized political opposition.

And so we see that no opposition could be developed in the FRG until the time of the student movement, not even parliamentary opposition, because Social Democracy had usurped and strangled all opposition movements.

This party is in any case the party of proletarian revisionism par excellence; and, as such, is the agent of capital within the proletariat from day one, is in reality openly and directly obeying the orders of Clay¹⁵ in Berlin, of the CIA, of the Pentagon, etc.

The development of the SPD, or, if one prefers, the alignment of its official policy line with official American foreign policy, and also with that of the CDU¹⁶, is part of the process that began with its activities against the opposition movements which existed prior to 1960 - opposition to re-armament, to the introduction of fascists into the State apparatus, to the integration of the German army into NATO, to equipping the German army with atomic weapons. This process continued until 1960 when Wehner¹⁷, in order to bring about the grand coalition, openly professed his loyalty to NATO – in the name of Social Democracy – and, to assure the integration of the Federal Republic into the western bloc, openly lent his support to Adnenauer's rollback policies against the East. This was a signal to American foreign policy that Social Democracy had fulfilled its post-war mission: to absorb and liquidate the legal opposition in the FRG.

What characterizes the specific dependency of West German imperialism with regards to US capital is not only that it is dominated by the USA, as is the case with all other States submitted to the system of US domination. Nor is it that the State is forced to conform politically and institutionally to the productive conditions of hegemonic capital. What is

¹⁵ Lucius D. Clay - Military Director of American occupied zone in Germany from 1947-1949.

¹⁶ SDS-SPD student group, which later opposed the SPD and became the key group in the student movement and the extra-parliamentary opposition.

¹⁷ Herbert Wehner – 1927-1942, member of German Communist Party (KPD). After 1946 member of the SPD. After 1958 president of SPD parliamentary group.

particular is that the State's political decision-making power was never accepted by its own constitutional organs, that is to say, that the State has become an instrument of the internal international policy of the USA.

From the beginning it was always more than just a question of the right to occupy Germany. It was, from the beginning, an institutional strategy. Meaning that US capital, after 1945, not only directed the integration of the Constitution of the FRG in its operational elements - a democracy with a Federal Chancellor and a parliament limited in its jurisdiction by the federalism of different provinces and by the integration of fascist administrative structures in the area of justice and the administration of the Federal Republic - it also took control of all of the bodies which make up an imperialist State: parties, employers' associations, unions, the mass media.

So we can say that the class confrontations in the Federal Republic have only had the appearance of a character of struggle; they were, in fact, a struggle in the void, if we may say so.

An example to illustrate this. The anti-nuclear movement developed as a result of debates, in parliament in March 1958 following the controversy of Heinnemann and Dehler¹⁸ with Adenauer, regarding his policy of reunification, whereby he had refused Stalin's proposals in 1952 and 1955 to hold western style elections in the GDR within the context of a neutral Germany. The point of departure for the movement was parliament's decision to equip the German army with weapons. The movement developed almost no consciousness, and did nothing but ratify a decision taken by NATO and, of course, by the Pentagon.

This is an example which clarifies the structure of the government. A structure put in place on the basis of the FRG being a defeated and occupied country, which permits the alignment of the essential processes within an institutional strategy, which excludes, or can exclude, democratic elections as a decisive factor or even an influential one - through the dominance of the military over the political.

What is essential is that this State could not play the role that it does today for American capital, if not for Social Democracy.

The old extra-parliamentary left, which was opposed to the process of the division of the two Germanys, to the remilitarization, to the integration into NATO, to the policy for the reconquest of the so-called German eastern territories, remained paralyzed until approximately 1960. The opposition in the unions, and, above all, in the IG Metall union (where a part of the SDS¹⁹, excluded from the SPD, had again found a base for political reproduction) was dissolved. Or, more precisely, was left worn out and crushed in the following years by the process which established emergency legislation against the

¹⁸ Thomas Dehler – 1949-1953, Federal Justice Minister under Adenauer. President of German Liberal Party (FDP) 1954-1957.

¹⁹ SDS-SPD student group, which later opposed the SPD and became the key group in the student movement and the extra-parliamentary opposition.

protests of the democratic left. Because on every occasion it was the SPD who acted as the spokesperson for criticisms addressed to government projects. In this way, the actual content of these projects, i.e., the use of the German army against the enemy within, the repression of strikes, the disbanding of parliament, the total mobilization of the population in the case of a State of Emergency, etc., was drowned in the quarrels of experts in constitutional law, and the opposition was eventually stripped of its popular base. Equally, the result was paralysis via the old trick of Social Democracy, the institutionalization of antagonisms, in this case in public hearings where everything happens on the level of experts and the question of power is eliminated.

If one wants to say in one word how Social Democracy ended up being qualified by US capital, one must say: through demagoguery.