

Embracing, Shaping, and Criticizing the Black Freedom Struggle: The Socialist Workers Party in the Black Power Era

In this dissertation project, Constantin Berlin aims to offer a new perspective on the Black Power era by analyzing the role of the white radical Left in the struggle for Black liberation. The study constructs an intellectual history of the Trotskyist Left in relation to the emerging Black nationalist movement in the 1960s. In doing so, the dissertation charts the Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) assessment of Black liberation throughout the first half of the 20th century and its position vis-à-vis Black nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s. It positions the Party as an early supporter of the Black Power movement and connector between the labor and Black Power movements, specifically through its organizing efforts in Detroit. Constantin Berlin argues that the emergence of Black nationalism had a galvanizing effect on the SWP's political ideology, leading the party to embrace the combined struggle for socialism and Black liberation and shape the left-wing current of the Black Power movement.

Constantin Berlin is a Ph.D. candidate in U.S. History & Society at Goethe University Frankfurt. He holds degrees in American Studies and Global Studies from Leipzig University and Roskilde University and was a Fulbright Scholar at UC Santa Barbara during his graduate studies. His research interests include 20th U.S. labor history, African-American history, intellectual history, and urban history.

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