



Obituary: Friederike Schlesak

League for the Fifth International Thu, 26/05/2011 - 09:01

League for the Fifth International

On 10 May, 2011, Comrade Friederike Schlesak, Friedl, died at the age of 99. For many years she was more to us than just a fellow fighter. She was at the same time the "mother" and Honorary President of the revolutionary organisation that we joined at the end of the 1980s, "ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt", the Austrian section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International.

She helped to train us as young revolutionaries. She was an irreplaceable link to a whole generation of communist fighters who took up the struggle against capitalism, fascism and then the Stalinisation of the Comintern in the 1920s and 30s.

Already as a young worker, Friedl joined the left wing of the socialist movement. The experience of the class struggle between the wars, and in the civil war of 1934, stayed with her for the rest of her life. It convinced her of the necessity of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and of imperialist barbarism. It was for this that she took a leading role in the illegal struggle against the dictatorships of Dollfus and Schussnigg and later against the Nazis.

Under both the Austro-fascist and the Nazi dictators she worked in the "League of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working-class" a Trotskyist organisation led by Josef Frei, the former leader of the Schutzbund and member of the leading committee of the Communist Party of Austria,

After the Second World War, she continued to work with her comrades as a persecuted and illegal revolutionary communist, a Trotskyist.

Friedl was a link between the generations, and she was an irreplaceable link because she never understood her role simply as that of a "witness to history". Rather, right until the end, she was always an active Communist, always a revolutionary woman who did not just contribute her experience but took an active part in the struggle for the future liberation of the class from exploitation and oppression. She was a "mother" of our organisation in the sense that Gorky and Brecht meant it, a fighting communist woman who stepped forward and held aloft the red flag of the revolution throughout her life. Since 10 May, this splendid woman and revolutionary is gone from us. But her achievements, her example and her dedication will always be in our memory. She is still with us as an example for the struggle of the proletariat, an entire class, which will finally achieve its victory because out of its ranks it will bring forward millions of Friedls, millions of fighting working-class women who take their destiny into their own hands and fight for a new classless society.

We will never forget her as such a revolutionary. We send our solidarity and our condolences to her relatives and closest comrades; Heinrich, Gerda, Margit, Traude, Willi and Bertl.

Markus Lehner, Martin Suchanek, Gerald Waidhofer (all Gruppe Arbeitermacht, Germany, formerly fellow members of ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt, Austria)