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Gerhard on National-Socialism

An essay on fascism and anti-fascism from 1932, from
a FAUD member who died in Sachsenhausen
concentration camp

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So onwards to a committed and united struggle against the fascist murderous pest! Away with the parties and politicians that sabotage the proletarian unity in fighting from below! This unity from the masses themselves, in action, that is what anarcho-syndicalism is!

From: Via Hildburghausen to the Third Reich! National Socialism and the working class (1932). Translated by: Isy Morgenmuffel.

Part of Beating Fascism : Anarchist anti-fascism in theory and practice <http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/2fqzjr>

The general fascist terror is not a sign of its inner strength, but of its inner weakness; because if National Socialism were strong and creative economically, socially and culturally, it would assert itself without violence. But because it is made up of classes that are falling apart and voiceless, it needs terror to make itself heard at all. Exaggerated terror has always been a sign for inner weakness.

And why should fascism not be defeatable, even before it has 'run itself to the ground'? Just because it is dominant in various countries in Southern and Eastern Europe? But these are mostly agrarian countries with a weak proletariat. Fascism was able to come to power there often after an unsuccessful revolution (Hungary, Italy).

In Germany, we have a strong proletariat experienced in fighting, that has not lost a revolution in the last few years, where the organisations of the proletariat are still strong and unbroken. Fascism was beaten down in Germany already twice since 1918, with much help from the proletariat: the Kapp Putsch in 1920 and the Hitler Putsch in 1923.

Therefore there shouldn't be talk in proletarian circles of the 'inevitability' and 'the running to the ground' of fascism. Let us direct our gaze at Spain, where the heroic fighting proletariat, led by anarcho-syndicalism, not only toppled Primo de Rivera's fascism in 1930, but also chased away the King and the Jesuits in April 1931. Let us look at Austria, where the proletariat, despite Social Democratic manoeuvres, defeated the Heimwehr fascism in 1930-31, and condemned it to ridiculousness. Why should the German proletariat be incapable of such actions?

Hitler [...] is putting himself forward as a candidate for the Reich presidency. But it would be a dangerous deception to give too much importance to the result of the vote. What is decisive is not the amount of votes for the reactionary Hindenburg or the fascist Hitler, nor the amount of votes for the [Communist] candidate Thaelmann, but the actual fighting power of the proletariat in its daily struggles.

The Nazis' Political and Economic Goals

The National Socialists' political aims have seen some large changes in some points, but in one matter their programme has remained consistent: approaching society's problems with an authoritarian attitude leading to submission, discipline, and blind obedience. Of course the old monarchy seems to them preferable to the Republic, and they are especially fond of the old army that they must be modelling themselves on, seeing as they would like to drive us to war again. Those who think the old militarism is something they had gotten over should read Hitler's opinion of the old army:

'The goodness inside the old Germany army was far superior to any other institution's ... there are no armies whose purpose is to keep the peace, only to wage war successfully. This was what was great with the old army, that at least in this organism, regardless of any talk in the Reichstag, the world was seen for what it is and always will be.' (*National Socialist Monthly* 1930, Nr.3)

Militarism, authority as world view – this is what National Socialism is. Even if humanity has been developing away from authority toward greater individual freedom in society, Hitler's slogan is back, back:

'There can never be a system that is based on anything other than authority downwards and responsibility upwards, otherwise all leadership is impossible and we end up with anarchist-bolshevik circumstances.'

This is what the Nazi leader said in his conversation with Otto Strasser. But maybe these anarchist-bolshevik circumstances are still better than the Third Reich? This is a question that does not seem to have occurred to Herr Hitler since he considers himself one of the 'new ruling class' who are meant to rule the workers, who only want 'bread and games'. But Hitler is very wrong in this; the workers will express their opinions on the Third Reich yet. [...]

The Nazis' enmity of the working class movement is real. We have further seen that the Nazis have done everything to be considered ready to govern. This means, their striving for power, their striving for a dictatorship over society is also real. Finally we have seen that they have sacrificed their supposed socialist and nationalist aims, that they have adapted themselves to bourgeois society, i.e. these aims were only show.

We can conclude that the Third Reich means nothing more than a dictatorship to suppress the workers. We call such a dictatorship fascism, which is the acknowledged ideal of the Nazis. As Frick said:

'Just like Mussolini wiped out the Marxists in Italy, we must obtain this too via dictatorship and terror.'

'Marxism' in the National Socialist sense means of course the general workers' movement, be it unions, associations, parties or whatever, it does not need to involve any Marxist world views, it may be reformist or, like in Spain and Italy, syndicalist – fascism attacks all. [...]

The National Socialist Terror

Despite all social slogans, the National Socialists might never had been able to grow into a party of six million if they hadn't approached their opponents with the weapons of the worst murderous terror. As it says in the *National Socialist Monthly* 1930 No.1:

'The helplessness of the bourgeois parties in the face of the Marxist advance expressed itself not only in their lack of ideas, but also in their lack of bravery to challenge the Marxist marches with their own, and protect themselves when necessary against attempts at terror.'

This is obviously strongly exaggerated, but there is a kernel of truth: The bourgeoisie was no longer in any position to play 'Master of the House' as they used to, the workers' movement could not

without unnecessary soldier games. The principle must be: No provocations, no attacks without reason, but determined persecution of all murdering bandits that have spilt proletarian blood or made themselves unpopular in some other way. No unnecessary armed actions, no unnecessary brushes with the State powers, but legal actions within the framework of self defence. No rash surprise attacks, but thorough observation and surveillance of the enemy. With the systematic use of the proletarian forces it will and it must be possible to push fascism off the streets again and to defeat it.

And if Hitler should attempt another Putsch like in November 1923, what then? What is to be done, if we suddenly find ourselves facing a more or less legal government of Hitlers? Then there can only be one slogan, that also saw success against the Kapp Putsch in 1920: the General Strike. A fascist government must be toppled as soon as it takes power, otherwise it anchors itself, conquers the State, and establishes a dictatorship as we have seen in Italy and many other countries. This would mean a time of immeasurable suffering for the revolutionary proletariat. Because of this we need to combat a fascist government as soon as it is created with the strongest weapon of the general strike.

There are many workers that think fascism is unavoidable anyway, so there is no use to fight it, it has to 'run itself into the ground'. Nothing is more wrong or more dangerous. Yes, fascism is a big danger, and no one can say whether a Hitler, Frick or Göring will take over the government in the next few months. But fascism is no undefeatable power. Leon Trotsky has correctly called the fascists 'human dust'. Indeed we have a random mix of farmers, petty bourgeois, former officers, certain small workers' groups and large capitalists facing us, a hopeless and directionless crowd without clear programme or goal, with a meaningless, miserable, slogan ideology, a mess that is only held together by the unprecedented poverty and troubles in foreign affairs. With the first energetic advance by the proletariat, the whole nightmare will fall apart.

revolutionary, independent unions are necessary that only see the interests of the workers and don't dance to the tunes of some Party bigwigs in the Reichstag or Moscow. These fighting unions are the goal of anarcho-syndicalism. [...]

The unified struggle in the workplace over the economic interests of the workers is of course not enough to beat fascism. Because in the workplace, in the employment offices, in gatherings, the proletariat does not come into contact with the Nazis, especially not with their civil war brigades, the storm troops. The SA works primarily on the streets. These murdering boys' terror is the most dangerous weapon of fascism. We must focus on defeating them especially.

Again, a mass attack on the cowardly SA fellows who usually dare only go for individuals or small groups is called for. And again, we see here the worst divisions. The 'Eiserne Front' [Iron Front: SPD], called 'the Corrugated Iron Front' or 'Rusty Front' by the people, operates separately from the forces of the KPD and other groups, and vice versa.

Let us remember the Contingent of the Hundred of 1923. Back then, the proletariat stood together in the workplaces generally independent of party orientation, and formed its fighting army, that achieved notable successes in many places, but also sometimes only played military games. Only this unity in the practical defence against fascism can ban this terrible danger for the German proletariat again. Only this unity that must come from below, from the workplaces, employment offices, living areas, can give that fighting power back to the proletariat that it so desperately needs. So away with the special interests of the Parties in the resistance to fascism!

Not empty demonstrations like the Tin Front hold, not desperate actions, individual terror like the Communists carry out in many places, will take the proletariat forward in the struggle against fascism. Instead, the fight against the SA must take place in a planned, systematic, manner deploying superior masses,

be just gotten rid of by now – so a party was called for that used social slogans in their propaganda – and terror in the struggle.

It has been estimated that over the last few years in Germany, a few hundred people of the various parties have been victim of the Nazi-terror, the number of injured goes up into the thousands. The Alarm concludes that from April to July 1930, 21 people were killed at the hands of Nazi gangs and over 200 were seriously injured. [...]

'Cologne, 22nd January. A serious political crime occurred last night in the Palantzer Street in the suburb of Suelz. A number of Communists that were having a conversation on the street were hit by some passing National Socialists without any provocation. The Communists defended themselves. During the course of the punch up the National Socialists fired many revolver shots. One shot killed the mechanic W. Höschel, who belongs to the Communist Party. He leaves four underage children...'

Of course the terrorised working class also resorts to acts of revenge, which you can't blame it for. Therefore it's tedious to establish guilt in individual cases. The crux is that these incidents did not occur on such a level before 1929, meaning that they are directly connected with the rise of the NSDAP. [...]

Calling the police against National Socialist terror misses the mark, because the police force is riddled itself with swastika-bearers, also the police are not deployed as they could be by the State because the State itself is eying up the swastika-bearers. [...] Beyond the two Nazi paradises of Thuringia and Braunschweig there are many Nazis in the police and army. [...] We as revolutionary workers must conclude from this, that the police and army, despite often being portrayed as 'Republican', cannot lead any kind of struggle against fascism. This we must do ourselves. [...]

Republican Fascism

The democratic parties point out at every opportunity that they reject National Socialism, and want to govern with liberal guidelines. But it can immediately be proven that Brüning's government and the all the politics of the middle parties lead to the fact that they want to wash their furs without making them wet, that they would rather like to get rid of the Nazis but shy away from hurting them in any way, even ending up directly or indirectly giving them an advantage. [...]

The emergency measures of the 28th March 1931 indicate a large step onto this disastrous course. It is supposed to be against political rioting and fights. According to it, even private assemblies have to be registered with the police, demonstrations of course anyway. Like in Wilhelm's times, assemblies are supervised by the police again, and can of course be dispersed by them. Offences carry 3 months prison. Just as tough sentences are threatened for owners of weapons, stickers, flyers etc. Organisations can be dissolved, newspapers banned, published materials confiscated. Nearly all the small 'freedoms' of the Weimar constitution are abolished through this, and not by any decision of the Reichstag, but by a signature from the administrative bodies, after they cleverly waited for the Reichstag to be adjourned.

Of course these measures are not directed at the National Socialists and their friends, but primarily against the revolutionary proletariat. To prove this we may point to the methods of the courts mentioned above, who have to deal with the measures. Already in the first days some workers received very tough sentences just for attempting to demonstrate and post notices.

Beating down, disarming the workers, the only anti-fascist force, cultural reaction of the worst kind, hidden bias toward and toleration of the Nazis in administrative bodies, giving in to their terror, taking on their demands – these are the stages leading to fascism that we are being taken on. Whether the men

apparatus for a ruthless dictatorship against all liberation and socialist endeavours.

We know that the intellectual leaders of these unfocused, de-classed middle classes are the greater industrialists and monarchist reactionaries that also support the propaganda to such an extent. These string pullers are who we need to fight especially, even if they are not so much in the foreground in the daily struggles, like their puppets Hitler, Goebbels, Ley etc.

Unity and energetic struggle in the workplaces, in the employment offices, and everywhere the proletarian masses come together is therefore the first pre-requisite for a victory over fascism.

But what do we see today? The union bigwigs suffocate all strikes, they let the attack on wages happen without any resistance, the Social Democrats and the central unions still support the half-fascist Brüning government. On the other side the KPD (Communist Party) have a pre fabricated solution for everything, which is: 'Only under leadership of the KPD can the victory be won.' The Party and its satellite groups believe it has the monopoly on proletarian organisation and throws random slogans from Moscow at the working class by the bundle, rather than derive the slogans from the needs and moods of the masses. The RGO drives the workers often into hopeless fights through false reports and deception, without being able to support the strikers. The logical consequence is that in such a difficult time of crisis as now, 90% of all strikes collapse. This is not changed by the untrue reports of success in the communist press either. What else could these misled politics of both parties have as a result, other than discouragement, division and embitterment of the workers?

We anarcho-syndicalists do not want any reformist politics of toleration, but no adventurist RGO-tactics either. We want unity amongst workers from below, in struggle, in the workplaces, in the employment offices. We want well prepared, concentric led struggles, that are still possible despite crisis and unemployment; struggles that the workers want and lead themselves. But for this, strong,

large slaughterhouses turn the butcher into merely a meat retailer, the milk yards and large milking factories work in the same direction, the landlords become dependent on the breweries. Economic life is more and more organised either by monopolies or collectives, the niche for the small shop owners and craftsmen is disappearing. Such a sinking class tends to adopt radical teachings, to fight with the National Socialists against the banks, the department stores, and even to adopt a muddled 'socialism'.

The situation is similar in rural areas. The agrarian crisis let anti-Semitic ideas and ideas of struggling against the Republican State arise amongst the farmers. They even went as far as to commit bomb attacks, storm the financial institutions, to prevent auctions with force. This tense atmosphere in the German countryside is of course a rich ground for National Socialism. [...]

Fighting Fascism

If the proletariat does not want to lose all its rights, like during the time of the Socialist Laws, if it does not want to suffer the same fate as our brothers in Italy and other countries, if the workers' movement is to exist at all in future, the proletariat must lead an energetic fight against fascism in its various forms, but especially against National Socialism. As much as we may recognise the class comrade and human in the individual National Socialist worker, employee, farmer or craftsman, we must lead a merciless fight against the movement as a whole, against the Führer, against the organised actions of the Nazis. We have seen in Thuringia and Braunschweig that the working class has been deprived of its rights by the fanatic reactionaries Frick, Franzen and friends, and that even harmless republicans and pacifists were persecuted. This shows us what we are facing when one day the Third Reich crashes in on us in its whole magnificence. Then it will be too late for counter actions, the National Socialists will use the state

working from the background will push Hitler and Goebbels to the forefront, or if they continue to leave the governing of a fascist Germany to the so-called democratic parties is not the main issue here. The most important issue is whether the workers succeed in maintaining and expanding their few achievements against the charge of the unified reaction, or whether they will lose all their rights. This is a struggle in which every government will be against them, whatever their name. In this struggle, the working class depends always only on its own strength.

What is National Socialism?

The National Socialists claim that their party is a movement made up of people from all walks of life, aimed at renewing Germany. They may be correct in this statement to a certain degree, that all classes are represented by them. There are also workers amongst them. Disappointed, bitter, unemployed people that hope to find some kind of existence in the storm troops, etc. may fill the ranks of the National Socialist workers. But do not overestimate these numbers! Because it must be low after everything. So far during the elections, the workers' parties have kept their votes. The relationship between the Nazis and workers becomes even more obvious looking at some figures from elections to works councils. Amongst the traffic workers of Hamburg, the Nazis got a whole 200 votes from 6225 workers, in the Hochbahn 187 from 1803 votes. At Brinkmann and Mergell in Hamburg the Nazis received only 50 from over 1000 votes. [...]

While these examples show that the Nazis' influence amongst the workers and working class is minimal, you must further consider that in most workplaces a Nazi faction was not even formed, due to a lack of the necessary forces. Furthermore, we have not heard anything about National Socialist unions so far, even though the National Socialists are creating independent organisations in

all areas. This gives us quite an insight. Under these circumstances you can hardly speak of a National Socialist workers' movement. In the Hitler party, there are no more workers than in any other bourgeois party. Even in these there are occasional workers and employees, without any reduction in the reactionary nature of these parties. [...]

A nobleman from Pommern, Major a.D.v. Bredow, even wants to mobilise all aristocratic colleagues to end the 'kaiser-less, terrible times'. He asked with indignation whether during this struggle: 'a part of the aristocracy wants to stand by idly and not acknowledge the Steel Helmets' and National Socialists' efforts for liberation? The men in this movement are our fighting units against the inner enemy...'

After all this, the number of aristocrats standing idly by cannot be so big, they are nearly all already in the NSDAP or a similar organisation. The proletariat is unfortunately not so eager to defend their rights...

Now you could assume that the princes and noblemen are just hanger-ons in the party and not that welcome. But those who know that all these people are treated with much respect and often hold leadership positions, especially in the SA, will not believe this anymore. But the position of the NSDAP toward the high society becomes especially obvious in the attempt by the *Völkische Beobachter* [People's Observer] to portray the Prince August Wilhelm as a 'worker':

'The professor is as good a worker as the smith, the salesman as the railway worker. And so the son of a prince too, who seeks intellectual activity, in politics or elsewhere, can count himself amongst the workers.'

The NSDAP as the protective guard of the princes and noblemen – this is the reality. And such activities as cutting coupons, profiting from interest rates, cutting profits, staying in spas etc., these are of course working. Otherwise the Hitler party would not count as many industrialists and capitalists amongst their friends. [...]

We have spoken of the workers, the farmers, the aristocratic reactionaries and the industrialists so far. Seeing as the workers that are with the Nazis are only some disappointed and angry workers or those who have always been reactionary, and the other classes never could form a mass Party like the Nazis are, the success of this Party would not be explained with what has been said so far. Incidentally, the interests and the traditional views of these classes are so divergent that it would be hard to create a unified movement. Something that unites them is missing. This is offered by the middle class, especially the independent craftsmen and retailers, but also the employees, civil servants, members of the free trades etc. We do not want to underestimate the social importance of this class. Against 14.4 million workers, we have, according to the census of 1925, 5.5 million self employed people in Germany, of which 90 percent can be considered petty bourgeois or small holders respectively, as well as 5.3 million employees and civil servants. This bourgeois middle class ended up in the movement because they are being crushed between the proletariat and corporate capital.

We should talk first about the urban middle class. There used to be many stages between the simple craftsman and the large manufacturer. Today, there are only small workshops and one corporation in most fields. You used to be able to buy any product in many different styles and price categories, today there are a few 'brands' whose price is pre-determined. There used to be many stages between the small corner shop and the department store in the City Centre. Now there are department stores and set price shops in all parts of the city and they belong to one corporation. Today, many factories open their own shops and maintain a far reaching sales and credit system. House ownership has been firstly concentrated in the hands of large housing corporations and secondly reduced in profit possibilities through the economy. Communal workshops, consumer co-operatives, book clubs, all forms of collective organisation take away existence potential from the petty bourgeois. The bread factory is slowly destroying the baker, frozen meat and the