The Only True Struggle Against Fascism is the Struggle for Proletarian Revolution

This article was written by German comrades in the context of an outcry from democrats and leftists following the electoral breakthrough of the neo-Nazi Nationaldemokratische Partei *(NPD) in the late 1960s.*

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The war cry of the democratic Saint George, riding into battle against the fascist dragon, resounds again today in Germany. All "true democrats"—and who isn't?—the peaceniks and the Maoists, the SDS[1] and the newly born DKP, all call for a holy fight against the resurrected "Nazi". Almost 25 years after the end of the Second World War, the alleged final victory of democracy over fascism, we are "none the wiser"!

Anyone who only observes things superficially would be inclined to pity poor Saint George: he can cut off as many of the dragon's heads as he likes, but new ones keep growing back; the devil must be behind it! And truly, all democratic attempts to explain fascism are limited to incantations: *Vade retro Satanas!* Let those who believe in the devil as evil incarnate be satisfied with such explanations and jab their pens at him. By contrast, let us briefly set out the following basic principles of Marxism:

1.) Fascism is neither a "relapse" into pre-democratic forms, nor is it "madness", but a necessary tendency of capitalist society.

2.) Hence there is no struggle against fascism unless it is the struggle for the annihilation of capitalism through proletarian revolution and dictatorship.

3.) Every call to defend democracy, every attempt to fight fascism on the basis of democracy, every alliance of the proletariat with "democratic" parties and classes leads to the destruction of the proletarian movement and paves the way for fascism.

We didn't invent these principles just now. The Marxist left, which led the Communist Party of Italy at the beginning of the twenties and then fought against the degeneration of the Third International, set them out as soon as fascism first appeared, and half a century's experience has only confirmed them.

For the democrat, the essence of fascism is that it openly uses "illegal" violence and abolishes democratic rights and freedoms. And it is precisely against this that they whine so pitifully. For us there is neither reason to whine, nor to be satisfied with such a characterization. We have always denied that the class struggle could be refereed by an allegedly superior authority, like a football match; we have always maintained that the working class cannot conquer political power democratically, that even the most democratic constitution serves to protect the capitalist form of production, that democracy masks the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie even when it is not—like it has done so often—drowning the labor movement in blood. Rejecting violence, invoking the legality of democracy, means renouncing the revolution from the outset! By contrast, we rejoice when the bourgeoisie throws off the velvet glove of democracy, openly shows the workers its iron fist and thus proves to them that there is no "justice" that stands above the classes; that the law expresses nothing other than the balance of power of the classes.

We have, on the other hand, recognized something quite distinct in fascism, namely the attempt, first, to overcome the differences within the bourgeoisie itself, and second, to deprive the workers' movement of any independence.

Democracy became the appropriate political form through which the various sectional interests of the bourgeoisie could express themselves. During the epoch of supposedly "peaceful" expansion of capitalism across the globe (around 1870–

[1] The *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, 1946-70, a leftist student federation.

1910), this form could prevail in the most powerful bourgeois states; just as the bourgeoisie could allow an independent workers' movement at the time, since it was able to satisfy some of the workers' immediate demands. The bourgeoisie even had the opportunity to bribe the workers with improvements in their economic condition, to distract them from the revolutionary struggle, and to convert their organizations to reformism.

In the age of imperialism this became increasingly difficult. Imperialism means not only the concentration of capital, but also the intensification of all contradictions in capitalist society. The bourgeoisie must try to overcome these contradictions. This means that the interests of the "private capitalist", of the individual enterprise, of this or that stratum, must be silenced in the overall interests of national capital (and sometimes of world capital). As the representative and manager of this general interest, the state becomes more and more centralized, and even legislation cannot be left to the free debate of parliamentary spokesmen of the various capitalist factions; rather, it falls almost directly into the hands of the agents of big business, which is forced to take control of "managing" capital in its entirety.

At the same time, the bourgeoisie cannot tolerate any independent workers' movement. This in no way means that it does not tolerate any workers' organizations at all (as was the case during the initial rise of capitalism, for example), but that it tries to deprive these organizations of any political class character and to integrate them into state administration as corporatist unions.

In short, the bourgeoisie tries to prevent political struggle between classes, to organize its society as a single unit and to "manage" it, ostensibly in the "common interest". Of course, this attempt is doomed to failure; or rather, it can only succeed for a short period of time. For the uninhibited operation of the laws of capitalist the capitalist economy, which progresses according to exclusively "mechanical" criteria (or so it seems!), reproduces the contradictions of capitalism on an even larger scale and inevitably leads to new crises in society. This is also the reason why fascism appears nationalist and bellicose from the outset: the bourgeoisie can only solve crises through war, and even then, only momentarily.

It is now clear that this necessary and general tendency of capitalism does not develop in a linear and uniform fashion, but that its manifestation and speed are determined by each specific situation. After the first imperialist war, this revealed itself first in the weakest capitalist countries: Italy and then Germany. It is true that the bourgeoisie succeeded in repelling the first revolutionary onslaught with the help of social democracy; but on the one hand the proletariat still posed a threat, and on the other, these bourgeoisies had the greatest difficulty in getting their post-war economies going. The need to unite all bourgeois classes, both against the proletariat and for the organization of the capitalist economy, revealed itself in these countries first. As one of the weakest, the Italian bourgeoisie showed the way to the others. Here, too, much more so than in Germany, the violence of fascism became apparent. For the proletarian movement was still strong and could only be destroyed by force, whereas by 1933 it was already hollow and rotten in Germany.

It was a great mistake of the Communist International to describe fascism as "reactionary". Of course, it *was* reactionary, but only in relation to the proletarian revolution: it was the most pronounced form of bourgeois counterrevolution, and at the same time, bourgeois progress. This became very clear after World War II: the "democratic" states defeated the "fascist" ones, but fascism defeated democracy, and all countries became, some quickly, other slowly, more "fascistic". We had foreseen this, and we will not be distracted by the "peaceful" nature of this fascification. In 1922–24 the strength of the Italian workers had to be broken in street fights (sometimes with the participation of the Italian navy); in Germany after 1933, only police terror and concentration camps were necessary to suppress the workers; after 1936, however, the Communist International was so rotten that the "Communist" party in France voluntarily subjugated the workers to the national interests of the "fatherland" and prepared them for the *Union Sacrée*; and even this was unnecessary in England and America. It was the opposite of

Goethe's Erlkönig: *if you are willing, I don't need violence.*[2]

The degree of sheer violence depends only on the resilience of the workers; we are far more interested in the content of fascification, and this has unfolded almost universally since the war: progressive concentration of capital and at the same time political power, as well as the integration of workers into the "people", into national unity. It is characteristic that the development of trade unions (e.g., in France) makes them more and more like Mussolini's *sindacati.* Trade unions that recognize the capitalist system of production as given once and for all, defend the interests of the factory and the fatherland, and at best only defend the corporate interests of their industrial sector as "partners" in this factory and in national production.

But it is not only proletarians who are increasingly oppressed by capital; the middle class also suffers from the totalitarianism of big business. In the period immediately after the World War this pressure was still weak, as the general reconstruction drove sales of all products. But with the first signs of saturation of the world market, with the harbingers of the general crisis, international competition sharpens, and every nation is forced to "rationalize" its production, to produce at lower cost, not only at the expense of the workers, but also of the petty bourgeois and small and medium sized enterprises. France is particularly characteristic in this regard: the old form of capitalism based on "usury" was forced to "modernize" itself and, among other things, to remove 800,000 people from agriculture over the past ten years; likewise, a great offensive is under way against the retail trade (witness the protests and demonstrations by shopkeepers!)[3] and the state is openly promoting the concentration of enterprises in order to increase the competitiveness of French production. Of course, this cannot be done without resistance from the petty bourgeoisie, a resistance that is all the greater since no proletarian attack threatens the foundations of capitalism. The history of Gaullism, which has only partially achieved its objectives, shows how difficult it is for the bourgeoisie to establish unity in the absence of an acute class struggle.

In Germany, after the annihilation of any labor movement, the defeat and destruction in the War allowed the bourgeoisie to win this unity "peacefully" and "democratically": all classes submitted to the needs of the reconstruction of German capitalism. But capitalist miracles don't last long. Pumped up with American capital, fattened by the peaceful exploitation of the workers it attracted from all over the world, German capitalism (which Lenin cited as a model of capitalist concentration as early as 1916) is already so plump that it is suffocating within its frontiers, all the more so as international competition shrinks these frontiers. (One of the reasons for the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 was precisely the need to prevent German capital from entering this hunting ground.) Thus, of course, capitalist expansion leads to capitalist crisis, which puts an end to the social peace[4] and world peace. The classes are in turmoil again and the nations are starting to wrangle with each other: "peaceful" fascism, the "democratic miracle" has failed and its legitimate offspring, brutal and bellicose fascism, is already showing its face. The NPD, for example, is both an expression of the objective expansionist force of German capital and an attempt to overcome the approaching crisis and social conflicts.

From the foregoing it is now clear that there is no point in weeping over this development. Statements such as…

> "The conduct and utterances of members of the leadership and spokesmen of the NPD ..... have shown that a militaristic, National Socialist and

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[2] A reference to one of the most famous poems in the German language. The original line is *Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt*—translated as "And if thou'rt unwilling, then force I'll employ".

[3] In the 1950s and 1960s *Poujadism* articulated the economic interests and grievances of shopkeepers and other owners of small businesses facing economic and social change.

[4] The German word used here, *Burgfrieden* (literally, "castle peace") refers specifically to the social peace between the German Social-democratic Party (SPD) and the government during World War I.

> otherwise undemocratic mentality [!!!] is alive in this party" (7. Federal Congress of the DGB)[5]

And assertions such as:

> "The development that led to the disasters of 1918 and 1945 must be prevented in Germany." (Chairman of the DGB regional district of Baden-Württemberg)

…are just as ineffective today as they were then. Their only real result is maintaining the illusion that people can freely "choose" between democracy and fascism, between peaceful and violent exploitation, and between peace and war. Behind all these phrases lies the miserable old dream of the petty bourgeois, naively formulated by the DFU [the German Peace Union] as follows:

"In a peaceful and democratic Germany all citizens can live contentedly and at ease from the fruits of our peaceful labor", the dream of the peaceful coexistence of classes and states, the dream of capitalism without contradictions!

But this is not just a childish dream. This ideology is an opium that is administered to the proletariat, all the more hastily and urgently as harsh reality threatens to open its eyes, making its class positions clear and tangible once again. There is no "choice" between democracy and fascism (i.e., between the hidden or open dictatorship of capital) nor between war and peace.

As long as capitalism exists, it goes its way, with its maniacal cycles of production and destruction, drinking the sweat and blood of the workers by turns. The true alternative faced by humanity is Dictatorship of Capital *or* Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Only the communist revolution, the annihilation of the bourgeois state and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship can break the yoke of capital, shatter all its economic laws and free humanity from its "prehistoric" sufferings.

We are not fooling ourselves or the workers: we know that the communist revolution is not for tomorrow morning. Not because workers lack the physical strength to do it! But because this revolution is only possible if the workers regain their class consciousness and their class organization. These were destroyed in the counterrevolution, and not so much with guns and truncheons as with democratic ideology. The enemy who appears openly as such is easier to fight than the cunning democrat who dissolves the clear awareness of class antagonisms in the "unity of the people"; he appears as the liberal petty bourgeois, who on the one hand wants the proletariat's support against big business, but at the same time works to undermine all proletarian class politics before converting to fascism because "there is no alternative". The result of the wrong tactics of the Communist International confirmed our position: such "brothers" are the most dangerous.

The real fight against fascism is the fight against democracy, the fight for the reconstitution of the proletarian class movement, with its class program and its class organization, the communist party. For many, this takes too long: "Fascism is coming, let's quickly unite all men of good will to fight it, now," they say. But in reality, such people are nothing other than defenders of capitalism.

The tenacious defense of communist positions; patiently reintroducing these positions into the working class; the daily connection of isolated struggles over wages with the ultimate historical objective of the proletariat; the struggle against democratic and pacifist ideology; these are the basic conditions for the reawakening of the proletariat.

However long it takes, this is the only way, and therefore the shortest way. Today there is no longer a fight "for democracy". Such a struggle still made sense when it was a question of breaking up pre-capitalist forms and organizations of society through democracy. But today it is a matter of smashing capitalism: only the proletarian dictatorship can do this!

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[5] *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, the main trade union confederation.